

C O N C I S E

Ecclesiastical History,

FROM

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST,

TO THE

Beginning of the present Century.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

V O L. I.

L O N D O N:

Printed by J. PARAMORE, at the Foundry, Moorfields;
And sold at the New Chapel, in the City-Road; and at the Rev.
Mr. Wesley's Preaching-Houses in Town and Country, 1781.

C O N T E N T S

Excavations at Hildesheim



THE BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE

Beginning of the present century.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOLUME I.

L O N D O N

Printed by J. G. & J. W. Smith, Stationers, 10, Abchurch Lane, London, E.C. 4.
And sold by the London General in the Strand, and by Messrs. J. G. & J. W. Smith, Stationers, 10, Abchurch Lane, London, E.C. 4.

P R E F A C E.

1. *FOR* many years I have been earnestly importuned to compile and publish an Ecclesiastical History, as it was urged that no tolerable one was yet extant in the English language. I answered, We have already an English History of the Church, wrote by Archdeacon Echard. But it was replied, This is allowed by impartial Judges, to be not only extremely imperfect, but also to be so exceeding dull, that one can hardly read it without falling asleep.

2. But I could in no wise think of compiling such an History. Want of Time was an insuperable hinderance. Abridging, I might possibly have found time for: but I knew no History of the Church worth abridging: till a few years since, a worthy man presented me with one, published thirty or forty years ago, by Dr. John Lawrence Mosheim, Chancellor of the University of Got-

tingen. This I read at leisure, with the greatest attention: and it partly answered my expectations. Much of what was wanting in Mr. Echard, his vast Learning and unwearied Industry supplied. And he is not a dull writer. Much of his History is as lively as the nature of the subject will bear.

3. But what is all this to the English Reader? Dr. Mosheim writes in Latin. Hence his work might have been long enough concealed, from those who do not understand that language, had not a learned and ingenious man, Dr. M'Laine, undertaken the translating of it into English. This he performed some years since in an accurate manner, with the addition of many Notes. But one inconvenience followed this, a large addition to the price. The price of the Latin work was Six Shillings, that of the English, Thirty.

4. I have endeavoured, if not wholly to remove, yet to lessen this inconvenience, by reducing the price of this valuable Work to one third. It may be observed, that part of the following History is translated from Dr. Mosheim; part abridged from Dr. M'Laine; but so as not to insert a single Paragraph without any alteration. And the far greater part of his numerous Notes, I do not meddle with. They may satisfy the curious: but would be of no use to the unlearned Reader.

5. Yet

5. Yet even in Dr. Mosheim's History many Articles are neither instructive nor entertaining. Among these we may rank nine parts in ten of what relates to the Heresies, that were propagated in the several Ages of the Church, and in the several Provinces of the Empire. As the greatest part of these were the mere whims and absurdities of senseless or self-conceited men, it was certainly doing them too much honour, to mention them in a serious History. And if they were not wholly past over, it was sufficient, barely to mention them, without entering into any detail of the nonsensical reveries of those idle dreamers. For if at the time when they fluttered about in the world, it was needful just to mention them, it is not worth our while now, to collect into one heap all the rubbish of seventeen hundred years.

6. I have likewise some objection to what Dr. Mosheim writes, concerning The Internal State of the Church. He does not seem clearly to understand, what the internal State of the Church means. He tells you, the State of Learning, the form of Government, the Doctrine, the Rites and Ceremonies in each Century: but certainly all these put together teach us very little of its Internal State. The internal State of individual Christians, and the Christian Church in general, is undoubtedly something far deeper, and widely

different from this. When righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost abound therein, then the Internal State of the Church is good. When these are generally wanting, the internal State of the Church is certainly bad. Consequently by the increase or decrease of these, its internal State is to be estimated.

7. To speak, without reserve, my naked sentiments; I do not find proof in any of his writings, that Dr. Mosheim himself, (though a very learned man) was much acquainted with Inward Religion. Perhaps it is owing to this, that he so severely condemns all the Mystic Writers in a lump. Perhaps to this are owing several other passages, which I can by no means approve of. But I chuse rather to leave them out, than to insert and censure them: especially considering he has many Excellencies, to ballance a few blemishes: and that he is, upon the whole, one of the best Writers that we have upon the subject.

*8. A little Objection I have also to the Stile, partly of the Original, but chiefly of the Translation. Many of the Sentences are far too long, spun out with abundance of unnecessary words. Probably both the Author and his Translator were admirers of Ciceronian periods. And it is allowed, they are not improper in Orations: but in History
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they should have no place. Sallust, not Cicero, is the standard for the stile of an History. This I have studiously endeavoured to correct, by paring off the superfluity of words, and leaving only so many in every sentence, as sufficed to convey the meaning of it.

9. But there is yet another Objection which appeared to me more considerable than either of the former. I fear, that sometimes the Author, sometimes the Translator, and now and then both the one and the other, have not done justice, either to the transaction which they relate, or to the Character of truly good men. In these instances I hope to be excused, for taking the same liberty with them both, which Dr. M'Laine has frequently taken with Dr. Mosheim: especially as I always endeavour to speak with modesty and with due respect to both those ingenious men. I take this liberty with the less scruple, because, though they have read many Books which I have not seen: yet, on the other hand, I have read many within these fifty years, which probably they never saw.

10. After all, there is one thing, of which I judge it absolutely needful to apprize the pious Reader, (that he be not offended) before he enters either upon this or any other History of the Church. Let him not expect to find an History of Saints, of
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men that walked worthy of their high Calling. It is true, there were a few, in every age, of these burning and shining lights. But they shone in a dark place, in a benighted world, a world full of darkness and cruel habitations. As the mystery of iniquity began to work even in the days of the Apostles, so not long after they were removed from the earth, it brought forth a plentiful harvest. It overspread the face of the earth; so that well-nigh all flesh corrupted their ways before the Lord. And from that time to this, it might truly be said, the whole world lieth in the wicked one; meaning thereby not only the Mahometan and Pagan, but also the Christian world.

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INTRODUCTION.

INTRODUCTION.

I. **E**Cclesiastical History is a narration of the transactions, and events, which relate to that large community, the CHURCH. It comprehends, both the *external* and *internal* condition of this community, and so connects each event with its causes, that the attentive reader may observe the displays of providential wisdom and goodness in the preservation of the church, and thus find his piety improved, as well as his knowledge.

II. The church of CHRIST cannot be represented with more propriety, than as a society governed by certain laws and institutions of a spiritual tendency. To such a society many external events must happen, which will advance or oppose its perfection, in consequence of its unavoidable connexion with the course of human affairs. It must also from the influence of external events, be liable to various changes in its internal constitution. In this view of things then the history of the church, like that of the state, may be divided into two general branches, which we may call its *External* and *Internal* history.

III. The *External* history of the church comprehends all the changes, and events, that have diversified the external state of this sacred community. And as all public societies have their periods of lustre and decay, and are exposed to revolutions both of a happy and calamitous nature,

so this first branch of Ecclesiastical History may be subdivided into two, comprehending the *prosperous* and *calamitous* events that have happened to the church.

IV. The prosperous events, that have contributed to extend the limits of the Christian church, have proceeded either from its rulers and leaders, or from its subordinate members. Under the former class, we rank its *public* rulers, such as princes, magistrates, and pontiffs, who, by their authority and laws, their liberality, and even their arms, have maintained its cause and extended its borders, as also its more *private* leaders, its learned and pious doctors, whose wise counsels, eminent examples, and distinguished abilities, have contributed to promote its *true* prosperity. Under the latter class, we may comprehend the advantages, which the cause of Christianity has derived, from the active faith, the invincible constancy, the fervent piety and extensive charity, of its genuine professors, who, by the lustre of these amiable virtues, have led many into the way of truth.

V. Under the *calamitous* events that have happened to the church, may be comprehended the injuries it has received from the vices of its friends, and the opposition of its enemies. The professors of Christianity, and especially the rulers of the church, have done unspeakable detriment to the cause of religion, by their ignorance and sloth, their luxury and ambition, their uncharitable zeal, animosities and contentions, of which many shocking examples will be exhibited in the course of this history. Christianity had *public* enemies, even princes and magistrates, who opposed its progress by penal laws and persecution; it had also private and inveterate adversaries
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in a certain set of philosophers, who, enslaved to superstition or abandoned to atheism, endeavoured to blast the rising church by their perfidious accusations and virulent writings.

VI. Such then are the events that are exhibited to our view in the external history of the church. Its *Internal History* comprehends the changes that have happened in its inward constitution, in that system of discipline, doctrine, and practice, by which it stands distinguished from all other religious societies. The causes of these internal changes are to be sought for principally in the conduct of those who have presided in the church. It has been frequently their practice to interpret the truths of religion in a manner accommodated to their particular systems, nay, to their private interest; and, while they have found in some implicit obedience, they have met with warm opposition from others. Hence have proceeded broils and commotions, in which the cause of religion has often been defended at the expence both of justice and humanity. All these things must be observed by an ecclesiastical historian.

VII. The first thing that should be treated in the *Internal History* of the church, is the history of its ministers, and form of government. When we look back to the commencement of the Christian church, we find its government administered by humble and gentle pastors. But, in process of time, we see these pastors affecting pre-eminence, and assuming supreme authority both in civil and religious matters. At length, a single man pretended a right to administer the affairs of the whole church with an unlimited sway.—Among the doctors of these early times, there were some who acquired, by their learned labours, an universal influence; their decisions were handed down

down to posterity as sacred rules of faith and practice; and they thus deserve to be mentioned among the governors of the church, though its public administration was not actually in their hands.

VIII. After giving an account of the rulers and doctors of the church, we exhibit a view of the *laws*, that form, as it were, its center of union, and distinguish it from other religious societies. These *laws* are of two kinds. The first are properly called *divine*, because they are immediately enacted by God himself, and are contained in those sacred books, which carry the most striking marks of a divine origin. They consist of those *doctrines* that are the objects of faith, and those *precepts* that are addressed to the heart. To the second kind belong those *laws* that are merely of human institution.

IX. As long as the scriptures were the only rule of faith, religion preserved its native purity; and, in proportion as their decisions were postponed to the inventions of men, it degenerated from its divine simplicity. It is necessary to shew under this head, what was the fate of the pure laws and doctrines of Christianity—how they were interpreted and explained—how they were defended against the enemies of the Gospel—how they were corrupted and adulterated by the ignorance and licentiousness of men. And, finally, it will be proper to inquire, how far the lives of Christians have been conformable to these sacred laws, as also to examine the rules of discipline prescribed by the governors of the church.

X. The *Human Laws*, that constitute a part of ecclesiastical government, consist in precepts concerning external worship, and, in certain rites, either confirmed by custom, or introduced by
express

express authority. *Rites* and *ceremonies* regard religion either *directly* or *indirectly*; by the former, we understand those that are used in the immediate worship of God; by the latter, such decent institutions as, besides direct acts of worship, have obtained in the church.

XI. As bodies politic are sometimes distracted with wars and seditions, so has the Christian church been. The principal authors of these divisions have been stiled *Heretics*, and their peculiar opinions *Heresies*. The nature therefore and progress of these *heresies* are to be carefully unfolded; and, if this be done with judgment, it must prove useful in the highest degree, though at the same time no branch of ecclesiastical history is so difficult, on account of the injurious treatment that has been shewn to the heads of religious sects, and the unfair representations that have been given of their tenets. And this difficulty has been considerably augmented by this, that the greatest part of their writings have not reached our times. It is therefore the duty of a candid historian to avoid attaching to this term the invidious sense in which it is too often used, since it is employed against truth, as frequently as against error.

XII. After thus considering what constitutes the *matter* of Ecclesiastical History, it will be proper to bestow a few thoughts on the *manner* of treating it. And in order to render both the External and Internal History of the Church truly useful, it is necessary to trace effects to their causes, and to connect events with the circumstances, views, principles, and instruments that have contributed to them. A bare recital of facts can but enrich the *memory*; but the historian, who enters into the secret springs of outward events,

gives a proper exercise to the *judgment* of the reader, and administers useful lessons of wisdom and prudence.

XIII. In order to discover the secret causes of public events, some general succours are to be derived from the *History of the times* in which they happened, and the *Testimonies of the authors* by whom they are recorded. But besides these, a considerable *acquaintance with human nature* is singularly useful. The historian, who has acquired a competent knowledge of the views that occupy the generality of men, who has studied a great variety of characters, and observed the force of human passions, together with the infirmities and contradictions they produce in the conduct of life, will find, in this knowledge, a key to the secret reasons and motives which gave rise to many of the most important events of ancient times. A knowledge also of the *manners and opinions* of the persons concerned, will contribute to lead us to the true origin of things.

XIV. There are besides these general views, particular considerations, which will assist us in tracing up to their true causes the various events of sacred history. We must, for example, in the External History of the church, attend carefully, *first*, to the political state of those nations in which the Christian religion has been embraced or rejected; and, *secondly*, to their religious state, *i. e.* the opinions they have entertained concerning the divine nature and the worship that is to be addressed to him. For we shall then perceive, with more certainty, the reasons of the different reception Christianity has met with in different nations.

XV. With respect to the *Internal History of the Church*, nothing is more adapted to lay open
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the hidden springs of its various changes, than an acquaintance with the *History of learning and philosophy* in the times of old. For it is certain, that human learning and philosophy have, in all times, pretended to modify the doctrines of Christianity; and that these pretensions have extended further than is consistent with the purity of the Gospel. It may also be observed, that a knowledge of the forms of civil government and of the superstitious rites of ancient times is not only useful, to illustrate several things in the External History of the church, but also to render a satisfactory account of its *Internal* variations both in doctrine and worship. For human laws, and the maxims of civil rulers have undoubtedly had a great influence in forming the constitution of the church; and even its spiritual leaders have, in too many instances, modelled its discipline after the ancient superstitions.

XVI. We cannot be at a loss to know the sources from whence this important knowledge is to be derived. The best writers of every age, and particularly those who were contemporary with the events they relate, are to be consulted, since it is from credible testimonies that history derives a solid foundation.

XVII. Those who undertake to write the history of the Christian church may receive a bias from *times, persons, and opinions*. The *times*, in which we live, have often so great an influence, as to make us consider the events, which happen in our days, as a rule by which we are to estimate those of past ages. The *persons*, on whose testimonies we depend, acquire an imperceptible authority over our sentiments, that too frequently seduces us to adopt their errors, especially if they have been distinguished by eminent virtue. And

an attachment to favourite *opinions* leads authors to pervert, or at least modify facts in favour of those who have embraced these opinions. It is not necessary to observe the solemn obligations that bind an historian to guard against these three sources of error.

XVIII. It is well known nevertheless how far ecclesiastical historians, in all ages, have departed from these rules. For it is evident, how few the impartial historians are, whom neither the influence of the sect to which they belong, nor the spirit of the times and the torrent of prevailing *opinion*, can turn aside from the pursuit of truth *alone*. In the present age, more especially, the spirit of the times and the influence of predominant opinions have gained an incredible ascendant.

XIX. If those who apply themselves to the composition of Ecclesiastical History, be careful to avoid these sources of error, their labours will be eminently useful to mankind, especially to those who are called to instruct others. The history of the church presents to our view a variety of objects adapted to confirm our faith. When we contemplate the united efforts of kingdoms and empires, and the dreadful calamities which Christianity, in its very infancy, was obliged to encounter, and over which it gained an immortal victory, this will fortify its zealous professors against all the threats, cavils, and stratagems of impious men. The shining examples which display their lustre, more or less, in every period of the Christian history, have an admirable tendency to inflame our piety. Those amazing events that distinguished every age of the church, and often seemed to arise from causes of little consequence, proclaim, with a solemn voice, the
empire

empire of providence, and the inconstancy of human things. And, among the many advantages of Ecclesiastical History, it is none of the least, that we shall see therein the origin of those ridiculous rites, foolish superstitions, and pernicious errors, with which Christianity is yet disfigured in many parts of the world. This knowledge may lead us to a view of the truth in its beautiful simplicity, may engage us to love it, and render us zealous in its defence.

XX. They, especially, who are appointed to instruct the youth in the universities, and such as are set apart for the service of the church, will derive from this study the most useful lessons of wisdom, to direct them in the discharge of their respective offices. Even the inconsiderate zeal of many, and the pernicious consequences thereof, will teach circumspection; and in the mistakes into which even men of eminent abilities have fallen, they will often see the things they are to avoid, and the sacrifices it will be prudent to make, in order to maintain peace and concord in the church.

XXI. As the history of the church is *External* or *Internal*, so the manner of treating it must be suitable. As to the first, when the narration runs through a great number of ages, it is proper to divide it into certain periods, which will assist memory, and introduce a certain method into the work. In the following history the usual division into centuries is adopted; though it be attended with inconveniences.

XXII. A considerable part of these inconveniences will be removed, if, besides this smaller division, we adopt a larger, and divide the space of time that elapsed between the birth of CHRIST and our days into certain grand periods. It is on

this account that we comprehend the following History in FOUR BOOKS, which will take in four remarkable periods: the FIRST will be employed in exhibiting the state of the Christian church, from its commencement to the time of CONSTANTINE the Great. The SECOND will comprehend the period from the reign of CONSTANTINE to that of CHARLEMAGNE. The THIRD will contain the History of the Church, from the time of CHARLEMAGNE to the memorable period when LUTHER arose. And the FOURTH will carry down the same history, from the rise of LUTHER to the present times.

A CONCISE
ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

B O O K I.

Containing the HISTORY of the CHRISTIAN
CHURCH from its first rise to the time of
CONSTANTINE the GREAT.

The F I R S T C E N T U R Y.

P A R T I.

Comprehending the External HISTORY of the
CHURCH.

C H A P T E R I.

*Concerning the civil and religious state of the
world at the birth of CHRIST.*

I. **A** GREAT part of the world was become
subject to the Roman empire, when
Jesus Christ made his appearance upon earth.
The remoter nations, which had submitted to the
yoke of this mighty empire, were ruled, either
by Roman governors invested with temporary
commissions, or by their own princes and laws,
in subordination to the republic. At the same
time the Roman people and their senate, though
they had not lost all shadow of liberty, were yet
reduced

reduced to a state of servile submission to Augustus Cæsar, who had united in his own person the titles of Emperor, Sovereign Pontiff, Censor, Tribune of the people, Proconsul; in a word, all the great offices of the state.

II. The Roman government, both with respect to its form and its laws, was certainly mild and equitable. But the injustice and avarice of the Prætors and Proconsuls, and the ambitious lust of conquest, which was the predominant passion of the Roman people, together with the rapacious proceedings of the Publicans, by whom the taxes of the empire were levied, were the occasions of perpetual tumults. And among the many evils that arose from thence we reckon the formidable armies, that were necessary to support these extortions in the provinces, and the civil wars, which frequently broke out between the oppressed nations and their haughty conquerors.

III. It must, at the same time, be acknowledged, that this supreme dominion of one people, over so many kingdoms, was attended with many considerable advantages to mankind in general, and to the propagation of Christianity in particular. For, by the means of this, many nations, different in their language, and in their manners, were united together in social intercourse. Hence a passage was opened to the remotest countries by the communications, which the Romans formed between the conquered provinces. Hence also the nations, whose manners were savage, were civilized by the laws and commerce of the Romans. And by this, the benign influence of letters and philosophy was spread abroad in countries, which had lain, before, under the darkest ignorance. All this contributed to the progress of the Gospel. Besides, the Roman empire, at the birth of Christ, was less

less agitated by wars and tumults, than it had been for many years before. The period in which our Saviour descended upon earth, may be justly styled the *Pacific Age*. And indeed, the tranquillity, that then reigned, was necessary to enable the ministers of Christ to execute, with success, their sublime commission.

IV. But all nations then lived in the practice of the most abominable superstitions. They all, except that of the Jews, acknowledged a number of governing powers whom they called Gods, and one or more of which they supposed to preside over each particular people. They worshipped these with various rites; they considered them as widely different from each other in sex, and power, in their nature, and also in their respective offices, and they appeased them by a multiplicity of ceremonies and offerings, in order to obtain their protection. So that, however different the degrees of enormity might be, in different countries; yet there was no nation, whose religious worship did not discover a manifest abuse of reason, and very striking marks of extravagance and folly.

But in process of time, the Greeks and Romans grew as ambitious in their religious pretensions, as in their political claims. They maintained that *their* gods, though under different names, were the objects of religious worship in all nations, and therefore they gave the names of their deities to those of other countries. This pretension, whether supported by ignorance, or other means, introduced inexpressible darkness and perplexity into the history of the ancient superstitions, and has been also the occasion of innumerable errors in the writings of the learned.

V. One thing, indeed, which appears remarkable, is, that this variety of religions and of
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gods neither produced wars nor dissensions among the different nations. Each nation suffered its neighbours to follow their own method of worship, to adore their own gods, to enjoy their own rites and ceremonies, and discovered no sort of displeasure at their diversity of sentiments in religious matters. There is, however, little wonderful in this spirit of mutual toleration, when we consider, that they all looked upon the world as one great empire, divided into various provinces, over every one of which a certain order of divinities presided, and that, therefore, none could behold with contempt the gods of other nations, or force strangers to pay homage to theirs. The Romans exercised this toleration in the amplest manner. For, though they would not allow any changes to be made in the religions that were publicly professed in the empire, nor any new form of worship to be openly introduced, yet they granted to their citizens a full liberty of observing, in private, the sacred rites of other nations, and of honouring foreign deities with feasts, temples, consecrated groves, and such like testimonies of homage.

VI. The deities of almost all nations were either ancient heroes, renowned for noble exploits, or kings and generals who had founded empires, or women, become illustrious by remarkable actions or useful inventions. The merit of these eminent persons, contemplated by their posterity with an enthusiastic gratitude, was the reason of their being exalted to celestial honours. The natural world furnished another kind of deities, that were added to these by some nations. And as the sun, moon, and stars shine forth with a lustre superior to that of all other material beings, they particularly attracted the attention of mankind, and received

ceived religious homage from almost all nations. From these beings of a nobler kind, idolatry descended into an enormous multiplication of inferior powers; so that in many countries, mountains, trees, and rivers, the earth, the sea, and the winds, nay, even virtues, vices, and diseases had their shrines attended by zealous worshippers. These deities were honoured with rites of various kinds, according to their respective nature and offices. The rites used in their worship were absurd and ridiculous, and frequently cruel and obscene. Most nations offered animals, and some proceeded to human sacrifices. As to their prayers, they were void of piety and sense both with respect to their matter and their form. Pontiffs, priests, and ministers, distributed into several classes, presided in this strange worship, and were appointed to prevent disorder in the performance of the sacred rites. This *order*, supposed to be distinguished by an immediate intercourse with the gods, abused their authority in the basest manner to deceive an ignorant people.

VII. But, beside the public worship of the gods to which all were admitted, there were certain religious institutions celebrated in secret by the Greeks and several eastern nations, to which a very small number were allowed access. These were commonly called *mysteries*; and the persons, who desired to be initiated therein, were obliged previously to exhibit satisfactory proofs of their fidelity and patience, by passing through various trials. The secret of these institutions was kept in the strictest manner, as the initiated could not reveal any thing that passed in them without exposing their lives to the most imminent danger; and that is the reason why we are so little acquainted with the true nature and design of these hidden

hidden rites. It is, however, well known, that, in some of those *mysteries*, many things were transacted, that were contrary to modesty.

VIII. It is certain, this religion had not the least influence towards exciting or nourishing true virtue. For the gods and goddesses, to whom public homage was paid, exhibited to their worshippers rather examples of egregious crimes, than of illustrious virtues. The gods were esteemed superior to men in power and immortality; but, in every thing else, they were considered as their equals. The priests were little solicitous to animate the people to a virtuous conduct either by their precepts or their example; nay, they plainly declared, that all that was essential to the true worship of the gods was contained in the rites and institutions which the people had received by tradition. And as to what regarded the rewards of virtue and the punishment of vice after this life, the general notions were partly uncertain, partly licentious, and often more proper to administer indulgence to vice, than encouragement to virtue. Hence, the wiser part of mankind, about the time of Christ's birth, looked upon this whole system of religion as a just object of ridicule. The consequences of this wretched theology were an universal corruption of manners, which discovered itself in the impunity of the most flagitious crimes. Juvenal and Persius among the Latins, and Lucian among the Greeks, bear testimony to the justice of this accusation. It is also well known, that no public law prohibited the sports of the gladiators, the exercise of unnatural lusts, the licentiousness of divorce, the custom of exposing infants, and of procuring abortions, nor the frontless atrocity of consecrating publicly stews and brothels to certain divinities.

IX. None

IX. Yet none of these nations ever arrived at such an excess of barbarity and ignorance, as not to have some discerning men among them, who were sensible of the extravagance of these religions. But of these observers, some were destitute of the weight and authority, that were necessary to remedy these over-grown evils; and others wanted the will to exert themselves in such a glorious cause. And, the truth is, none of them had wisdom equal to such an arduous enterprize. This appears manifestly from the laborious, but useless efforts of some of the Greek and Roman philosophers. These venerable sages delivered, in their writings, many sublime things concerning the nature of God, and the duties incumbent upon men; they disputed against the popular religion; but to all this they added such absurd subtilties of their own, as may convince us, it belongs to God alone, and not to man, to reveal the truth without any mixture of error.

X. About the time of Christ's appearance upon earth, two kinds of philosophy prevailed among the civilized nations. One was that of the Greeks, adopted also by the Romans; the other, that of the Orientals, which had a great number of votaries in Persia, Syria, Chaldea, Egypt, and even among the Jews. The former was distinguished by the simple title of *philosophy*. The latter was honoured with the more pompous appellation of *science*, or *knowledge*, since those who embraced this, pretended to be the restorers of the knowledge of God, which was lost in the world. The followers of both these systems subdivided themselves into a variety of sects.

As we shall have occasion hereafter to speak of the oriental philosophy, we shall confine ourselves here to the doctrines taught by the Grecian sages.

XI. Among the Grecian sects, there were some which declared openly against all religion; and others, who, though they acknowledged a deity, yet cast a cloud over the truth, instead of exhibiting it in its genuine beauty.

Of the former kind were the Epicureans and Academics. The Epicureans maintained, "That the world arose from chance; that the gods (whose existence they did not dare to deny) neither did, nor could extend their care to human affairs; that the soul was mortal: that *pleasure* was to be regarded as the ultimate end of man; and that *virtue* was neither worthy of esteem nor choice." The Academics asserted the impossibility of arriving at truth, and held it uncertain, "Whether the gods existed or not; whether the soul was mortal or immortal; whether virtue were preferable to vice, or vice to virtue?" These two sects, though they struck at the foundations of all religion, were the most numerous of all others at the birth of Christ, and were particularly encouraged by the liberality of the rich, and the protection of those in power.

XII. There was another philosophy, in which religion was admitted, but which was deficient by the obscurity it cast upon truth. Under the philosophers of this class, may be reckoned the Platonists, the Stoics, and the followers of Aristotle, whose subtle disputations concerning God, religion, and the social duties, were of little use to mankind. The nature of God, as it is explained by Aristotle, is something like the principle that gives motion to a machine; it is a nature happy in the contemplation of itself, and entirely regardless of human affairs; and such a divinity cannot reasonably be the object either of love or fear. With respect to the soul,
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it is uncertain, whether he believed its immortality or not. What then could be expected from such a philosophy? could any thing satisfactory, in favour of piety, be hoped for from a system which excluded from the universe a divine providence, and insinuated the mortality of the soul?

XIII. The god of the Stoics has somewhat more majesty, than the divinity of Aristotle; nor is he represented as sitting above the starry heavens in a supine indolence, and a perfect inattention to the universe. Yet he is described as a corporeal being, united to matter by a necessary connexion, and subject to the determinations of an immutable *fate*, so that neither rewards nor punishments can properly proceed from him. The learned also know that, in the philosophy of this sect, the existence of the soul was confined to a certain period of time. Now it is manifest, that these tenets remove, at once, the strongest motives to virtue, and the most powerful restraints upon vice; and, therefore, the stoical system may be considered as a body of pompous doctrine, but, at the same time, as a body without nerves, or any principles of consistence and vigour.

XIV. Plato is generally looked upon as superior to all the other philosophers in wisdom; and this eminent rank does not seem to have been undeservedly conferred upon him. He taught that the universe was governed by a being, glorious in power and wisdom, and possessed of a perfect liberty and independence. He extended also the views of mortals beyond the grave, and shewed them prospects adapted to excite their hopes and fears. His doctrine, however, besides the obscurity with which it is often expressed, has

many other considerable defects. It represents the supreme creator of the world as destitute of many perfections, and confined to a certain determinate space. Its decisions, with respect to the soul, and dæmons, are too much adapted to nourish superstition. Nor will the moral philosophy of Plato appear worthy of such high admiration, if we attentively examine and compare together its various parts.

XV. As then in these different sects, there were many things maintained that were highly unreasonable and absurd; certain men were of opinion, that none of these sects were to be adhered to in all matters, but that it was wise to extract out of each such tenets as were good, and to abandon the rest. This gave rise to a new form of philosophy in Egypt, which was called the *Eclectic*. It appears from the testimony of Philo the Jew, who was himself one of this sect, that this was in a flourishing state at Alexandria, when our Saviour was upon the earth.

XVI. The attentive reader will easily conclude from this short view of the miserable state of the world at the birth of Christ, that mankind, in this period of darkness and corruption, stood highly in need of some divine teacher to convey to the mind *true and certain principles* of religion and wisdom. The consideration of this wretched condition of mankind will be also useful to those who are not sufficiently acquainted with the advantages, comforts, and support, which the doctrines of Christianity are so proper to administer in every state,

C H A P. II.

*Concerning the civil and religious State of the
JEWISH NATION at the birth of CHRIST.*

I. **T**HE state of the Jews was not then much better than that of other nations. They were governed by Herod, who was himself a tributary to the Roman people. His government was a yoke of the most vexatious and oppressive kind. By a cruel temper, he drew upon himself the aversion of all, not excepting those who lived upon his bounty. By a mad luxury and a magnificence far above his fortune, he exhausted the treasures of that miserable nation. Under his administration, and by his means, the Roman luxury was received in Palestine, accompanied with the worst vices of that licentious people. In a word, Judea, governed by Herod, groaned under all that corruption, which might be expected from the authority and the example of a prince, who, though a Jew in outward profession, was, in point of morals and practice, a contemner of all laws human and divine.

II. After the death of this tyrant, the Romans divided the government of Palestine between his sons. In this division the one half of Judea was given to Archelaus; and the other was divided between his two brothers, Antipas and Philip. Archelaus followed the example of his father's crimes in such a manner, that the Jews, grown weary of his administration, laid their grievances before Augustus, who delivered them from their oppressor, by banishing him from his dominions about ten years after the death of Herod. The kingdom was then re-

duced to the form of a province, and added to the jurisdiction of the governor of Syria.

III. However severe the authority was, which the Romans exercised over the Jews, it did not extend to the suppression of all their civil and religious privileges. The Jews were, in some measure, governed by their own laws, and permitted the enjoyment of their own religion. The administration of religious ceremonies was committed, as before, to the high-priest, and the sanhedrim; to the former of whom the order of the priests and levites was in the usual subordination; and the form of outward worship, except in a very few points, suffered no visible change. But it is impossible to express the calamities and vexations, which this unhappy nation suffered from the presence of the Romans, whom their religion obliged them to look upon as a polluted people, and, in a more particular manner, from the avarice and cruelty of the Prætors, and the frauds and extortions of the Publicans. So that, all things considered, their condition, who lived under the government of the sons of Herod, was more supportable than the state of those, who were immediately subject to the Roman jurisdiction.

IV. It was not, however, from the Romans alone, that the calamities of this miserable people proceeded. Their own rulers multiplied their vexations, and hindered them from enjoying any comforts left them by the Roman magistrates. The leaders of the people, and the chief priests, were profligate wretches, who had purchased their places by bribes, or by acts of iniquity, and who maintained their ill-acquired authority by the most abominable crimes. The subordinate members were infected with the corruption of
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the head; the priests, and those who possessed any authority, were dissolute and abandoned to the highest degree; while the multitude, set on by these corrupt examples, ran head-long into every sort of iniquity, and by their endless seditions, robberies, and extortions, armed against them, both the justice of God, and the vengeance of men.

V. Two religions flourished at this time in Palestine, viz. the Jewish and the Samaritan, whose respective followers beheld those of the opposite sect with the utmost aversion. The Jewish religion stands in the books of the Old Testament; but at this time, it had lost much of its primitive aspect. Errors of a pernicious kind had infected the whole body of the people, and the more learned part of the nation were divided upon points of the highest consequence. All looked for a deliverer, but not for such a one as God had promised. Instead of a spiritual Saviour, they expected a warlike prince, to break off their chains, and set them at liberty from the Roman yoke. All regarded the whole of religion, as consisting in the rites appointed by Moses, and in the performance of some external acts of duty. They were horribly unanimous in excluding from eternal life all other nations; and, as a consequence, they treated them with the utmost inhumanity, when any occasion offered.

VI. Religion had not a better fate among the learned. The supercilious doctors, who vaunted their profound knowledge of the law, were constantly shewing their ignorance by their religious differences, being divided into a great variety of sects. Of these, three, in a great measure, eclipsed the rest, both by the number of their adherents, and the authority they acquired. These

These were the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes. There is frequent mention made of the two former in the sacred writings; but the knowledge of the latter is to be derived from Josephus, Philo, and other historians. These three illustrious sects agreed in the fundamental principles of the Jewish religion, while, at the same time, they were involved in endless disputes upon points of importance; and their controversies could not but be highly detrimental to the illiterate multitude.

VII. It may not be improper to mention some of the principal matters that were debated among these famous sects. One of the main points was: *Whether the written law alone, was of divine authority.* The Pharisees added to this law another, which had been received by oral tradition. This the Sadducees and Essenes rejected, and adhered to the *written law* as the only divine rule of obedience. They differed also in their opinions concerning the true *sense of the law*. For, while the Pharisees attributed to the sacred text a double sense, one of which was obvious, regarding only the *words*, and another mysterious, relating to the intimate nature of the *things* expressed; and while the Sadducees maintained that nothing further was delivered by the law, than that which was contained in the literal signification of the words; the Essenes, at least the greatest part of that sect, entertained an opinion different from both. They asserted, in their jargon, that the words of the law were void of all power, and that the things expressed by them, were the images of holy and celestial objects. These unintelligible wranglings, about the sense of the divine word, were succeeded by a controversy of the greatest moment, concerning the rewards

rewards and punishments of the law. The Pharisees were of opinion, that these rewards and punishments extended both to the soul and body, and that their duration was prolonged beyond the limits of this transitory state. The Sadducees assigned to them the same period that concludes this mortal life. The Essenes differed from both; and maintained that future rewards and punishments extended to the soul alone, and not to the body, which they considered as a mass of malignant matter, and as the prison of the immortal spirit.

VIII. None of these sects seemed to have true piety at heart; nor were their principles and discipline at all adapted to the advancement of it. The Pharisees courted popular applause by a vain ostentation of sanctity, while they were strangers to true holiness, and inwardly defiled with the most criminal dispositions. The Sadducees, by denying future rewards and punishments, removed, at once, the most powerful incentives to virtue, and the most effectual restraints upon vice, and thus gave new vigour to every sinful passion. As to the Essenes, they were a superstitious tribe, who, looking upon piety to God as incompatible with social attachment to men, dissolved, by this pernicious doctrine, the great bonds of human society.

IX. While then such darkness prevailed among these, it will not be difficult to imagine, how corrupt the multitude must have been. They were sunk in the most deplorable ignorance of God, and of divine things; and had no notion of any other way of rendering themselves acceptable to the Supreme Being, than by sacrifices, and the other external rites of the Mosaic law. Hence proceeded that profligate wickedness, which

which prevailed among the Jews, during Christ's ministry upon earth.

X. If any part of the Jewish religion was less corrupted than the rest, it was the form of external worship, established by the law of Moses. And yet a variety of rites were introduced into the service of the temple, of which no traces are to be found in the sacred writings. The institution of these additional ceremonies was owing to those revolutions, which rendered the Jews more conversant with the nations round about them, than they had formerly been. For when they saw the sacred rites of the Greeks and Romans, they were taken with several of their ceremonies, and did not hesitate to adopt them in the service of the true God.

XI. The Samaritans, who celebrated divine worship in the temple that was built on mount Gerizim, lay under the same evils that oppressed the Jews, (with whom they lived in the bitterest enmity,) and were also, like them, highly instrumental in increasing their own calamities. They suffered as much as the Jews, from troubles and divisions fomented by the intrigues of factious spirits. Their religion also was more corrupted than that of the Jews themselves, as Christ declares in his conversation with the woman of Samaria. For they mixed the errors of the Gentiles with the sacred doctrines of the Jews, and were excessively corrupted by the idolatrous customs of the Pagan nations.

XII. Mean time the Jews multiplied so prodigiously, that the narrow bounds of Palestine were no longer sufficient to contain them. They poured, therefore, their increasing numbers into the neighbouring countries, and that with such rapidity, that, at the time of Christ's birth, there
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was scarcely a province in the empire, where they were not found. They were maintained, in foreign countries, against injurious treatment and violence, by the protection of the magistrates; and this was absolutely necessary, since, in most places, the remarkable difference of their religion and manners, from those of the other nations, exposed them to the hatred and indignation of the multitude. All this appears to have been most wisely directed by the adorable hand of an interposing providence, to the end, that this people, which was the sole depositary of true religion, being spread abroad through the whole earth, might be every where a reproach to superstition, and prepare the way for that yet fuller discovery of divine truth, which was to shine upon the world from the gospel of the Son of God.

C H A P. III.

Concerning the life and actions of JESUS CHRIST.

I. **T**HE errors and disorders, that we have now been considering, required something far above human wisdom and power to remove them, and to deliver mankind from the miserable state to which they were reduced by them. Therefore, towards the conclusion of the reign of Herod the Great, the Son of God descended upon earth, and, taking upon him the human nature, appeared to men under the sublime characters of an infallible teacher, an all-sufficient mediator, and a spiritual and immortal king. The place of his birth was Bethlehem, in the land of Palestine. The year, in which it happened,

pened, has not hitherto been fixed with certainty. That which appears most probable, is, that it happened about a year and six months before the death of Herod, in the year of Rome 748, or 749. The uncertainty, however, of this point is of no sort of consequence. We know that the *Sun of Righteousness* has shone upon the world. And though we cannot fix the precise period in which he arose, this will not hinder us from enjoying the influence of his vital and salutary beams.

II. Four inspired writers, who have transmitted to us an account of the life and actions of Jesus Christ, mention particularly his birth, his lineage, his family, and his parents; but they say very little concerning his infancy and his earlier youth. Not long after his birth, he was conducted by his parents into Egypt, that he might be out of the reach of Herod's cruelty. When he was but twelve years old, he discoursed in the temple with the most learned of the Jewish doctors, concerning the sublime truths of religion. And the rest of his life, until the thirtieth year of his age, was spent in the obscurity of a private condition. This is all that the wisdom of God has permitted us to know, with certainty, of Christ, before he entered upon his public ministry.

III. Jesus began his public ministry in the thirtieth year of his age; and to render it more solemn, a man, whose name was John, the son of a Jewish priest, a person much respected on account of the austere dignity of his life and manners, was commanded by God to proclaim to the people the coming of the Messiah, that had been promised to their fathers. This extraordinary man called himself the fore-runner of
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of the Messiah. Filled with a holy zeal, he cried aloud to the Jewish nation to depart from their transgressions, that they might partake of the blessings which the Son of God was now come to offer to the world. These exhortations were not without effect, and those who, moved by his solemn admonitions, had formed the resolution of amending their lives, were initiated into the kingdom of the Redeemer by baptism, Matt. iii. 6. John i. 31. Christ himself, before he began his ministry, was baptized by John, that he might not, in any point, neglect to answer the demands of the Jewish law.

IV. It is not necessary to enter here into a particular detail of the life and actions of Jesus Christ. All Christians know, that, during the space of three years, and amidst the deepest trials, he instructed the Jewish nation in the will of the Most High, and omitted nothing, in the course of his ministry, that could contribute either to gain the multitude, or to charm the wise. His life was a continued scene of the most perfect sanctity, and the purest and most active virtue, not only without spot, but also beyond the reach of suspicion. And by miracles of the most stupendous kind, and not more stupendous than salutary and beneficent, he displayed to the universe the truth of that religion, which he brought with him from above.

V. As this divine religion was to be propagated to the ends of the earth, it was necessary that Christ should chuse a certain number of persons, to accompany him through the whole course of his ministry; that they might be witnesses of the sanctity of his life and the grandeur of his miracles, to the remotest nations; and also transmit to the latest posterity a genuine ac-

count of his sublime doctrines. Therefore Jesus chose, out of the multitude that attended his discourses, twelve persons, by the name of Apostles. These were illiterate, poor, and of mean extraction; such being most proper to answer the views of the divine Saviour. He avoided making use of the ministry of persons endowed with the advantages of fortune, or eloquence and learning, lest the progress of the gospel should be attributed to human and natural causes, 1 Cor. i. 21. These apostles were sent but once to preach to the Jews during the life of Christ, Matt. x. 7. He chose to keep them about his own person, that they might be thoroughly instructed in the affairs of his kingdom. That the multitude, however, might not be destitute of teachers to enlighten them with the knowledge of the truth, Christ appointed seventy disciples to preach the glad tidings throughout the whole province of Judea, Luke x. 1.

VI. A great number of the Jews, struck with those illustrious marks of divine authority, that shone forth in the ministry and actions of Christ, regarded him as the true Messiah. But the rulers of the people, and especially the chief priests and Pharisees, whose licentiousness and hypocrisy he censured with a noble and generous freedom, laboured with success, to extinguish in their breasts the conviction of his celestial mission. Fearing also lest the ministry of Christ should diminish their credit, and deprive them of the advantages they derived from their authority in religious matters; they laid snares for his life, which, for a considerable time, were without effect. They succeeded, at length, by the treachery of Judas, who delivered him into the merciless hands of a brutal soldiery.

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VII. In consequence of this, Jesus was first brought before the Jewish high-priest and sanhedrim, before whom he was accused of having violated the law, and blasphemed the majesty of God. Dragged from thence to the tribunal of Pilate, he was there charged with seditious enterprises, and with treason against Cæsar. Both these accusations were so evidently false, yea, so destitute of every appearance of truth, that they must have been rejected by any judge, who acted upon the principles of common equity. But the clamours of an enraged populace, set on by their priests and rulers, intimidated Pilate, and engaged him, though with the utmost reluctance, and in opposition to the dictates of his conscience, to pronounce a capital sentence against Christ. And as the end of his mission was to make expiation for the sins of men, so when all things were ready, and when he had finished the work of his glorious ministry, he placidly submitted to the death of the cross, and with a serene and voluntary resignation, committed his spirit into the hands of the Father.

VIII. On the third day he resumed that life which he had voluntarily laid down; and, rising from the dead, declared to the universe thereby, that the divine justice was satisfied, and the paths of salvation rendered accessible to the human race. He conversed with his disciples during forty days after his resurrection, and employed that time in instructing them more fully concerning the nature of his kingdom. Many wise reasons prevented his shewing himself publicly at Jerusalem. He contented himself with manifesting the certainty of his resurrection to a sufficient number of faithful witnesses. After this, having given his disciples a divine

commission to preach the glad tidings of salvation to the human race, he ascended into heaven in their presence, and resumed the enjoyment of that glory, which he was possessed of before the worlds were created.

C H A P. IV.

Concerning the prosperous events that happened to the church during this century.

I. **J**ESUS, being ascended into heaven, soon shewed his afflicted disciples, that he was still their omnipotent protector. Fifty days after his departure from them, he gave them the first proof of that power to which he was exalted, by the effusion of the Holy Ghost upon them according to his promise, Acts ii. 1, &c. The consequences of this were infinitely honourable to the Christian religion. For no sooner had the apostles received this precious gift, than their ignorance was turned into light, their doubts into certainty, their fears into a firm and invincible fortitude, and their former backwardness into an ardent and inextinguishable zeal, which led them to undertake their sacred office with the utmost intrepidity. This marvellous event was attended with a variety of gifts, particularly the gift of tongues, so indispensably necessary to qualify the apostles to preach the gospel to the different nations.

II. The apostles began their ministry, by preaching the gospel, according to Christ's command, first to the Jews, by endeavouring to bring that deluded people to the knowledge of the truth, Luke xxiv. 47. Acts i. 8. xiii. 46.

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Nor were their labours unsuccessful, since, in a very short time, many thousands were converted. From the Jews they passed to the Samaritans, to whom they preached with such efficacy, that great numbers of that nation acknowledged the Messiah. And, after they had exercised their ministry, during several years, at Jerusalem, and brought to a sufficient degree of maturity the Christian churches which were founded in Palestine and the adjacent countries, they carried the gospel to all the nations of the world, and saw their labours crowned with abundant fruits.

III. No sooner was Christ exalted on high, than the apostles determined to render their number complete, as it had been fixed by their divine master, and accordingly to chuse in the place of Judas, a man endowed with such sanctity and wisdom, as were necessary in a station of such vast importance. Having therefore gathered together the small assembly of Christians, which had then been formed at Jerusalem, two were proposed as candidates for this sacred office. These men were Matthias and Barnabas, the former of whom was, by lot, chosen to the dignity of an apostle, Acts i. 26.

IV. All these apostles were men without education, and ignorant of letters and philosophy. But Jesus himself, by an extraordinary voice from heaven, called to his service a thirteenth apostle, whose name was Saul (afterwards Paul) and whose acquaintance both with Jewish and Grecian learning was very considerable, Acts ix. This extraordinary man, who had been one of the most virulent enemies of the Christians, became their most glorious defender. Independent of the miraculous gifts, with which he was enriched, he was possessed of an invincible

courage, an amazing force of genius, and a spirit of patience, which no fatigue could overcome, no sufferings exhaust. To these the cause of the gospel, under the divine appointment, owed a considerable part of its rapid progress.

V. The first Christian church, founded by the apostles, was that of Jerusalem, which was the model of all those that were afterwards erected during this first century. This church was governed by the apostles themselves, to whom both the elders and the deacons were subject. The people, though they had not abandoned the Jewish worship, held separate assemblies, in which they were instructed by the apostles and elders, prayed together, celebrated the Lord's supper in remembrance of his death and sufferings, and, at the conclusion of these meetings, testified their mutual love, partly by their liberality to the poor, and partly by friendly repasts, which from thence were called *feasts of charity*. Among the virtues, which distinguished the rising church, that of charity to the poor shone with the brightest lustre. The rich supplied the wants of their brethren with such liberality, that among the primitive disciples of Christ, all things were in common.

VI. The apostles having finished their work at Jerusalem, travelled over a great part of the known world, and in a short time planted a vast number of churches among the Gentiles. Several of these are mentioned in the sacred writings; though these are but a small part of the churches, which were founded either by the apostles themselves, or by their disciples under their immediate direction. The distance of time, and the want of records, leave us at a loss with respect

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to many interesting circumstances, nor have we any certain accounts of the limits of their voyages, of the countries where they sojourned; or of the times and places in which they finished their course. The stories that are told concerning their exploits among the Gauls, the English, the Spaniards, the Germans, the Americans, the Chinese, the Indians, and the Russians are too romantic, to be received by an impartial enquirer after truth. The greatest part of these fables were forged after the time of Charlemagne, when most of the Christian churches contended about the antiquity of their origin, with as much vehemence as the Arcadians, Egyptians, and Greeks disputed formerly about their precedence.

VII. When we consider the rapid progress of Christianity, and the feeble instruments by which this amazing event was effected, we must naturally have recourse to an omnipotent hand, as its true and proper cause. For unless we suppose this, how was it possible that men, destitute of all human aid, without credit or riches, learning or eloquence, could, in so short a time, persuade a considerable part of mankind to abandon the religion of their ancestors? How was it possible, that an handful of apostles, fishermen and publicans, could engage the learned and the mighty, as well as the simple and those of low degree, to forsake their favourite prejudices, and to embrace a new religion which was an enemy to their corrupt passions? And, indeed, there were undoubted marks of a celestial power perpetually attending their ministry. There was, in their very language, an incredible energy; to which were added; stupendous miracles, the foretelling of future events, the power of discerning the secret

secret thoughts and intentions of the heart, a magnanimity superior to all difficulties, a contempt of riches and honours, a serene tranquillity in the face of death, and an invincible patience under torments still more dreadful than death itself; and all this accompanied with lives free from all stain, and adorned with the constant practice of all virtue.

C H A P. V.

Concerning the calamitous events that happened to the church.

I. **T**HE innocence that distinguished the lives of Christ's servants, and the purity of the doctrine they taught, were not sufficient to defend them against the malignity of the Jews. Their priests and rulers, not only loaded with injuries the apostles of Jesus, and their disciples, but condemned as many of them, as they could, to death, and executed in the most barbarous manner their sanguinary decrees. The murder of Stephen, of James the son of Zebedee, and of James, surnamed the Just, bishop of Jerusalem, furnish dreadful examples of this.

II. The Jews who lived out of Palestine, in the Roman provinces, did not yield to those of Jerusalem in cruelty. We learn from records of unquestionable authority, that they seized every occasion of animating the magistrates against the Christians, and setting on the multitude to demand their destruction. The high-priest, and the Jews, who dwelt in Palestine, excited the rage of the foreign Jews against the infant church, by sending messengers to exhort them not only
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to avoid all intercourse with the Christians, but to persecute them in the most vehement manner. They gave out, that the Christians were enemies to the Roman emperor, since they acknowledged the authority of a person whose name was Jesus, whom Pilate had punished as a malefactor, and on whom, nevertheless, they conferred the royal dignity. These insinuations had the intended effect, and the rage of the Jews against the Christians was conveyed from father to son; so that the church of Christ had, in no period of time, more desperate enemies than that very people, to whom the Saviour was more especially sent.

III. The supreme judge of the world did not let the barbarous conduct of this perfidious nation go unpunished. The most signal marks of divine justice pursued them; and their cruelties were dreadfully avenged. God, who had for so many ages protected them, withdrew his aid. He permitted Jerusalem, with its temple, to be destroyed, an innumerable multitude of this devoted people to perish by the sword, and the greatest part of those that remained, to groan under severe bondage. Nothing can be more affecting than the account of this terrible event, and the tremendous calamities which attended it, as they are given by Josephus, himself a Jew, and also a spectator of this horrid scene. From this period the Jews experienced, in every place, the hatred of the Gentiles still more than they had formerly done. And in these their calamities the predictions of Christ were amply fulfilled.

IV. However virulent the Jews were against the Christians, yet, upon many occasions, they wanted power to execute their purposes. This was not the case with the Heathen nations; and therefore

therefore from them the Christians suffered the severest calamities. The Romans are said to have pursued the Christians with the utmost violence in ten persecutions, but this number is not exactly verified by the ancient history of the church. For if, by these persecutions, such only are meant as were universal throughout the empire, it is certain, these amount not to that number.

V. Before we proceed, we may enquire, how it happened, that the Romans, who were troublesome to no nation on account of their religion, and who suffered even the Jews to live under their own laws, treated the Christians alone with such severity? Especially considering that the nature of the Christian religion, and its tendency to promote both the public welfare of the state, and the private felicity of the individual, entitled it, in a singular manner, to the protection of the reigning powers. One of the principal reasons of the severity, with which the Romans persecuted the Christians, seems to have been the abhorrence with which they regarded the religion of the empire, which was so intimately connected with the form, and, indeed, with the very essence of its political constitution. For, though the Romans gave an unlimited toleration to all religions, which had nothing in their tenets dangerous to the commonwealth, yet they would not permit that of their ancestors, which was established by the laws of the state, to be turned into derision. But the Christians ridiculed the absurdities of the Pagan superstition, and they were assiduous in gaining proselytes to the truth. Nor did they only attack the religion of Rome, but all the different forms under which superstition appeared in various countries. From hence the Romans concluded, that the Christian
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sect was not only insupportably daring and arrogant, but, moreover, an enemy to the public tranquillity. It is on this account, that Tacitus reproaches them with the odious character of *haters of mankind*, and styles the religion of Jesus a *destructive superstition*; and that Suetonius speaks of the Christians, and their doctrine, in terms of the same kind.

VI. Another circumstance, that irritated the Romans against the Christians, was the simplicity of their worship, which resembled, in nothing, the sacred rites of any other people. The Christians had neither sacrifices, nor temples, nor images, nor oracles; and this was sufficient to bring upon them the reproaches of an ignorant multitude. Thus they were looked upon as a sort of Atheists. But this was not all: the interests of a multitude of selfish priests were immediately connected with the ruin of the Christian cause. The public worship of such an immense number of deities was a source of subsistence, and even of riches to the whole rabble of priests and augurs, and also to a multitude of merchants and artists. And as the progress of the gospel threatened the ruin of this religious traffic, and the profits it produced, this raised up new enemies to the Christians, and armed the rage of mercenary superstition against them.

VII. To accomplish more speedily the ruin of the Christians, those, whose interests were incompatible with the progress of the gospel, loaded them with the most opprobrious calumnies, which were too easily received by the unthinking multitude. We find a large account of these ill-grounded reproaches in the writings of the first defenders of the Christian cause.

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And these, indeed, were the only arms they had; since the excellence of the gospel, and the virtue of its ministers and followers, left its enemies no resources, but calumny and persecution. They went so far as to persuade the multitude, that all the calamities, wars, tempests, and diseases that afflicted mankind, were judgments sent down by the angry gods, because the Christians, who contemned their authority, were suffered in the empire.

VIII. The various kinds of punishments, which were employed against the Christians, are particularly described by learned men. The forms of proceeding, used in their condemnation, may be seen in the *Acts of the Martyrs*, in the letters of Pliny and Trajan, and other ancient monuments. These judicial forms were very different, and changed naturally according to the mildness or severity of the laws, enacted against the Christians. Thus, at one time, we see the most diligent search made after the followers of Christ; at another, all perquisition suspended, and positive accusation and information, only, allowed.

IX. They who, in the perilous times of the church, fell by the hand of bloody persecution, and expired in the cause of the divine Saviour, were called Martyrs, a term, borrowed from the sacred writings, which signifies Witnesses, and thus expresses the glorious testimony, which these magnanimous believers bore to the truth. The title of Confessors was given to such, as, in the face of death, and at the expence of honours, fortune, and all the other advantages of the world, confessed with fortitude, before the Roman tribunals, their firm attachment to the religion of Jesus. The veneration that was paid to both

Martyrs

Martyrs and Confessors, is hardly credible. The distinguishing honours and privileges they enjoyed, the authority, with which their counsels and decisions were attended, would furnish ample matter for a history apart, and such an undertaking might be highly useful in many respects. There was, no doubt, as much wisdom, as justice, in treating with such respect these Christian heroes: since nothing was more adapted to encourage others to suffer with cheerfulness in the cause of Christ. But, as the best and wisest institutions are generally perverted by the weakness or corruption of men: so the authority and privileges granted in the beginning to martyrs and confessors, became, in process of time, a support to superstition, an incentive to enthusiasm, and a source of innumerable evils.

X. The actions and sayings of these holy martyrs, from the moment of their imprisonment to their last gasp, were carefully recorded, in order to be read on certain days, and thus proposed as models to future ages. But few, however, of these ancient acts are come down to our times; the greatest part of them having been destroyed during that dreadful persecution which Diocletian carried on ten years against the Christians. For a most diligent search was then made after all their books and papers; and all of them that were found were committed to the flames.

XI. It would have been surprizing, if, under such a monster of cruelty as Nero, the Christians had enjoyed tranquillity. But this was far from being the case; he accused them of having set fire to the city of Rome, that horrid crime, which he himself had committed with a barbarous pleasure. In avenging this crime upon the in-

nocent Christians, he so ordered matters, that the punishment should bear some resemblance to the offence. He, therefore, wrapt up some of them in combustible garments, and ordered fire to be set to them when the darkness came on, that thus, like torches, they might dispel the obscurity of the night; while others were fastened to crosses, or torn in pieces by wild beasts, or put to death in some such dreadful manner. This horrid persecution was set on foot in the month of November, in the 64th year of Christ. The death of Nero, who perished miserably in the year 68, put an end to this persecution, under which, during the space of four years, the Christians suffered every sort of torment.

XII. Though, after the death of Nero, this persecution ceased, yet the flame broke out anew in the year ninety-three or ninety-four, under Domitian, a prince little inferior to Nero in all sorts of wickedness. It was extremely violent, though his untimely death put a stop to it not long after it commenced. Flavius Clemens, a man of consular dignity, and Flavia Domitilla his niece, were the principal martyrs that suffered in this persecution, in which also the apostle John was banished to the isle of Patmos. Tertullian and other writers inform us, that, before his banishment, he was thrown into a caldron of boiling oil, from whence he came forth not only living but unhurt.

P A R T II.

The INTERNAL HISTORY of the CHURCH.

C H A P T E R I.

*Containing an account of the state of LEARNING
and PHILOSOPHY.*

I. **I**F we had any certain account of the doctrines, which were received among the eastern nations, when the light of the gospel first rose upon the world, this would illustrate many important points in the ancient history of the church. But the fragments of the ancient oriental philosophy that are come down to us, are few in number; and such as they are, they require the diligence, and sagacity of learned men to arrange them with method, and to explain them with perspicuity.

II. The doctrine of the *magi*, who believed the universe to be governed by *two principles*, the one good and the other evil, flourished in Persia. Their followers, however, were not all agreed concerning the nature of these principles; but this did not prevent the propagation of the main doctrine, which was received throughout a considerable part of Asia and Africa, especially among the Chaldæans, Assyrians, Syrians, and Egyptians, though with different modifications, and had even infected the Jews themselves.

III. From the earliest times the Indians were distinguished by their taste for sublime knowledge. We might, perhaps, be able to form a judgment of their philosophical tenets, if that most ancient

book, which they looked upon as particularly sacred, and which they call *veda*, or the law, were brought to light. But the accounts, which are given of this remarkable book, by those who have been in the Indies, are so various and irreconcilable with each other, that we must yet wait for further satisfaction. As to the Egyptians, they were divided into a multitude of sects; so that their labour seems exceeding fruitless, who endeavour to reduce the philosophy of this people to one system.

IV. But of all the different systems of philosophy that were received in Asia and Africa about the time of our Saviour, none was so detrimental to the Christian religion, as that which was styled *gnosis*, or science, i. e. *the way to the true knowledge of the deity*, usually called the *oriental doctrine*. It was from the bosom of this pretended wisdom, that the chiefs of those sects, which in the three first centuries perplexed and afflicted the Christian church, originally issued forth.

V. The first principles of the oriental philosophy were these: "There are many evils in this world, and men seem impelled by a natural instinct to the practice of those things which reason condemns; but that eternal mind, from which all spirits derive their existence, must be inaccessible to all kinds of evil, and also of a most perfect and beneficent nature; therefore the origin of those evils, with which the universe abounds, must be sought somewhere else than in the deity. It cannot reside in him who is all perfection; and therefore it must be *without* him. Now, there is nothing *without* or *beyond* the deity, but *matter*; therefore *matter* is the center and source of all evil, of all vice." Having taken for granted these principles, they proceeded further,

further, and affirmed, that matter was eternal, and derived its present form, not from the will of the supreme God, but from the creating power of some inferior intelligence, to whom the world and its inhabitants owed their existence.

VI. The state of letters among the Jews comes next under consideration; and of this we may form some idea from what has been said already concerning that nation. The dark and hidden science, which they called the *kabbala*, was, at this time, taught by many among that superstitious people. This science, in many things, bears a strong resemblance to the oriental philosophy, or, to speak more accurately, it is that same philosophy accommodated to the Jewish religion. Nor were the doctrines of the Grecian sages unknown to the Jews at the period now before us; since from the time of Alexander the Great, some of them had been admitted even into the Mosaic religion.

VII. The Greeks were yet in possession of the first rank among the nations that cultivated letters. In many places and especially at Athens, there were a considerable number of men distinguished by their learning, acuteness, and eloquence; philosophers of all sects, who taught the doctrines of Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, and Epicurus; rhetoricians also and men of genius, who instructed the youth in the rules of eloquence. So that those who had a passion for the study of oratory, resorted in multitudes to the Grecian schools, in order to perfect themselves in that noble science. Alexandria, in Egypt, was also much frequented for the same purpose, as a great number of the Grecian philosophers dwelt in that city.

VIII. The Romans also, at this time, made a shining figure among the learned nations. All

the sciences flourished at Rome. The youth of a higher rank were early instructed in the Greek language and eloquence. From thence they proceeded to the study of philosophy, and the laws of their country; and they finished their education by a voyage into Greece, where they not only gave the last degree of perfection to their philosophical studies, but also acquired that elegance of taste, that served to set off their more solid attainments. None of the philosophical sects were more in vogue among the Romans than the Epicureans and the Academics, which were peculiarly favoured by the great, who, soothed by their doctrines into a false security, indulged their passions without remorse. During the reign of Augustus, the culture of polite learning was held in great honour, and those that contributed with zeal and success to this, were eminently distinguished by that prince. But, after his death, learning languished, and was neglected, because the succeeding emperors were more intent upon the arts of war, than those more amiable arts that are the fruits of leisure and peace.

IX. With respect to other nations, as the Germans, Celts, and Britons, they were not destitute of learned and ingenious men. Among the Gauls, the people of Marseilles had long acquired a shining reputation for their progress in the sciences; and there is no doubt, but the neighbouring countries received the benefit of their instructions. Among the Celts, their druids, priests, philosophers, and legislators were remarkable for their wisdom; but their writings, at least such as are yet extant, are not sufficient to inform us of the nature of their philosophy. The Romans, indeed, introduced letters and philosophy

philosophy into all the provinces, which submitted to their victorious arms, in order to soften the rough manners of the savage nations, and form in them, imperceptibly, the sentiments of humanity.

C H A P. II.

*Concerning the doctors and ministers of the church,
and its form of government.*

I. **T**HE great end of Christ's mission was to form an universal church, gathered out of all the nations of the world, and to extend the limits of this great society from age to age. But, in order to this, it was necessary, first, to appoint *extraordinary teachers*, who should erect, every where, Christian assemblies; and then, to establish *ordinary ministers*, who should enforce the doctrines delivered by the former, and maintain the people in their holy profession, and in the practice of Christian virtues. For the best system of religion must necessarily dwindle to nothing, or be egregiously corrupted, if it is not perpetually inculcated by a regular and standing ministry.

II. The *extraordinary teachers*, whom Christ employed to lay the foundations of his kingdom, were the twelve apostles, and the seventy disciples. To these the Evangelists are to be added, by which title those were distinguished, whom the apostles sent to instruct the nations, or who, of their own accord, abandoned every worldly attachment, and consecrated themselves to the sacred office of propagating the gospel. In order to have a just idea of the nature of the apostolic function, we must consider an apostle, as a person
who

who was honoured with a divine commission, invested with the power of *making laws, of controlling and restraining the wicked*, when that was expedient, and of *working miracles*, when necessary; and sent to mankind, *to unfold to them the divine will, to open to them the paths of salvation, and unite in the bonds of one sacred society, those who were obedient to the voice of God.*

III. The accounts we have of the seventy disciples, are more obscure than those of the apostles. Their first commission extended no further than the Jewish nation, as appears from the express words of St. Luke; though it is highly probable, that, after Christ's ascension, they performed the function of Evangelists, and declared the glad tidings of salvation, through different nations.

IV. Neither Christ himself, nor his holy apostles, have commanded any thing clearly or expressly concerning the external form of the church, and the precise method, according to which it should be governed. From this we may infer, that the regulation of this was, in some measure, to be accommodated to the time, and left to the prudence of the chief rulers of the church. If, however, it is true, that the apostles acted by divine inspiration, and in conformity with the commands of their blessed master, (and this no Christian can call in question,) then it follows, that that form of government which the primitive churches borrowed from that of Jerusalem, the first Christian assembly established by the apostles themselves, must be esteemed as of divine institution. But from this it would be wrong to conclude that such a form is immutable, and ought to be invariably observed; for this a great variety of events may render impossible. In those early times, every Christian church consisted

sisted of the *people*, their *leaders*, and the *ministers*, and these, indeed, belong essentially to every religious society.

V. There reigned among the members of the Christian church, however distinguished they were by worldly rank and titles, not only an amiable harmony, but also a perfect equality. This appeared by the *feasts of charity*, in which all were indiscriminately assembled; and by the names of *brethren* and *sisters*, with which they mutually saluted each other. Nor at first, was the distinction made between Christians of a more or less perfect order, which took place afterwards. Whoever acknowledged Christ as the Saviour of mankind, and made a solemn profession of his confidence in him, was immediately baptized and received into the church. But when the church began to increase, it was thought necessary to divide Christians into two orders, *believers* and *catechumens*. The former were those, who had been admitted into the church by baptism, and in consequence were instructed in all the mysteries of religion. The latter were such, as had not yet been dedicated to God by baptism, and were, therefore, admitted neither to the public prayers, nor to the holy communion, nor to the ecclesiastical assemblies.

VI. The rulers of the church were either *presbyters* or *bishops*; persons of eminent gravity and sanctity. And it was very early provided with inferior ministers. These servants of the church, being chosen from among the Jews, who were born in Palestine, were suspected by the foreign Jews of partiality in distributing the offerings, which were for the support of the poor. To remedy this, seven deacons were chosen, by order of the apostles, and

and employed in the service of that part of the church of Jerusalem, which was composed of the foreign Jews, converted to Christianity. Of these new ministers, six were foreigners, as appears by their names: the seventh was chosen out of the Proselytes, of whom there were many among the first Christians at Jerusalem, and to whom it was reasonable, that some regard should be shewn, in the election of the deacons, as well as to the foreign Jews. All the other Christian churches followed the example of that of Jerusalem, in whatever related to the choice and office of the deacons. Some, particularly the eastern churches, elected *deaconesses*, and chose, for that purpose, matrons or widows of eminent sanctity, who also ministered to the necessities of the poor, and performed several other offices, that tended to the maintenance of order and decency in the church.

VII. Such was the constitution of the Christian church in its infancy. A presbyter of remarkable piety and wisdom ruled each congregation in perfect harmony; it being judged necessary that one man of distinguished gravity and wisdom should preside in the council of presbyters, in order to distribute among his colleagues their several tasks, and to be a center of union to the whole society. This person was, at first, styled the *angel* (Rev. ii. 1.) of the church to which he belonged, but was afterward distinguished by the name of *bishop*, or inspector; a name borrowed from the Greek language, and expressing the principal part of the episcopal function, which was to inspect into, and superintend the affairs of the church. In this capacity, he acted not so much with the authority of a *master*, as with the zeal and diligence of a faithful

ful *servant*. He instructed the people, performed the several parts of divine worship, attended the sick, and inspected into the circumstances and supplies of the poor. He charged, indeed, the presbyters with the performance of those services, which through the multiplicity of his engagements he could not fulfil; but did not decide or enact any thing without the consent of the presbyters. And, though the episcopal office was both laborious and singularly dangerous, yet its revenues were extremely small, since the church depended on the *oblations* of the multitude, which were divided between the bishops, presbyters, deacons, and poor.

VIII. The power and jurisdiction of the bishops were not long confined to these narrow limits, but soon extended themselves by the following means. The bishops, who lived in the cities, had, by their own ministry or that of their presbyters, erected new churches in the neighbouring towns and villages. These churches, continuing under the inspection of the bishops, by whose labours and counsels they had been engaged to embrace the gospel, grew imperceptibly into ecclesiastical provinces, which the Greeks afterwards called *dioceses*. But as the bishop of the city could not extend his labours and inspection to all these churches in the country, he appointed certain deputies to govern and instruct these new societies, and they were distinguished by the title of *chorepiscopi*, i. e. country bishops. This order held the middle rank between bishops and presbyters, being inferior to the former, and superior to the latter. The churches, in those early times, were entirely independent; each governed by its own rulers and its own laws. Nothing is more evident than the perfect equality that reigned
among

among the primitive churches; nor does there appear, in this first century, the smallest trace of that association of provincial churches, from which *councils* and *metropolitans* derive their origin. It was only in the second century that the custom of holding councils commenced in *Greece*, from whence it spread through the other provinces.

IX. The principal place among the Christian doctors, and among those also, who by their writings were instrumental in the progress of the truth, is due to the apostles and certain of their disciples, who were inspired by God, to record the actions of Christ and his apostles. The writings of these holy men are comprehended in the books of the New Testament. The opinions of the learned, concerning the time when the books of the New Testament were collected into one volume, are extremely different. It is sufficient for us to know, that, before the middle of the second century, the greatest part of the books of the New Testament were read in every Christian society throughout the world, as a divine rule of faith and manners. Hence it appears, that these sacred writings were separated from human compositions either by some of the apostles themselves, or by their disciples and successors. We are well assured that the *four gospels* were collected during the life of St. John, and that the three first received the approbation of this apostle. And why may we not suppose that the other books of the New Testament were gathered together at the same time? Urgent necessity required its being done. For, not long after Christ's ascension, several histories of his life and doctrines, full of fabulous wonders, were composed. Nor was this all: productions were imposed upon the world as the writings of the holy

holy apostles. These spurious writings must have produced a sad confusion, had not the rulers of the church used all possible care and diligence in separating the books that were truly divine from that spurious trash, and conveying them down to posterity.

X. The writer, whose fame surpassed that of all others in this century, the apostles excepted, was Clemens bishop of Rome. The accounts which remain of his life, actions, and death, are for the most part uncertain. *Two Epistles to the Corinthians*, written in Greek, have been attributed to him, of which the *second* has been looked upon as spurious and the *first* as genuine, by learned writers. But they are now unanimous in regarding the other writings which bear the name of Clemens, viz. *the apostolic canons, the apostolic constitutions, the recognitions of Clemens and Clementina*, as spurious productions ascribed by some impostor to this venerable prelate. The *apostolical canons*, which consist of eighty-five *ecclesiastical laws*, contain a view of the church-government received among the Greek and oriental Christians in the second and third century. The eight *books of apostolical constitutions* are the work of some melancholy author, who, having taken it into his head to reform the Christian worship, made no scruple to prefix to his rules the names of the apostles, that thus they might be more favourably received. The *recognitions of Clemens*, which differ very little from the *Clementina*, are the production of an Alexandrian Jew, well versed in philosophy. They were written in the third century, with a design to answer, in a new manner, the objections of the Jews, and gnostics, against the Christian religion.

XI. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, succeeds Clemens in the list of the *apostolic fathers*, among
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whom were placed such Christian doctors as had conversed with the apostles themselves, or their disciples. This venerable man, who was the disciple and familiar friend of the apostles, was, by the order of Trajan, brought to Rome, and exposed to wild beasts in the public theatre, where he suffered martyrdom with the utmost constancy. There are yet extant several epistles attributed to him, concerning the authenticity of which there have been warm disputes among the learned. Of these epistles, seven are said to have been written by this eminent martyr, during his journey from Antioch to Rome; and these, most learned men acknowledge to be genuine, as they stand in the edition that was published in the last century from a manuscript in the Medicean library. The others are generally rejected as spurious. The *Epistle to the Philippians*, which is ascribed to Polycarp bishop of Smyrna, who in the middle of the second century suffered martyrdom in an advanced age, is undoubtedly genuine. The *Epistle of Barnabas* was the production of some Jew, who, probably lived in this century, and whose superstitious attachment to Jewish fables shews, that he must have been a very different person from the true Barnabas, St. Paul's companion. The work entitled, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, because the angel, who bears the principal part in it, is represented in the habit of a shepherd, was composed in the second century by Hermas, who was brother to Pius bishop of Rome. This whimsical writer has taken the liberty to invent several conversations between God and the angels, in order to insinuate the precepts which he thought useful, into the minds of his readers. But the discourse, which he puts into the mouths of those celestial beings, is more insipid and senseless, than what we commonly hear among the meanest of the multitude.

C H A P. III.

Concerning the doctrine of the Christian church in this century.

I. **T**HE whole of the Christian religion is comprehended in two great points, of which the first regards what we are to believe, and the other our conduct and actions. The former are expressed by the apostles by the term *the truth*; the latter by that of *godliness*. The rule and standard of both are those books which contain the Revelation, that God made of his will to persons chosen for that purpose. And these divine books are usually called *The Old and New Testament*.

II. The apostles and their disciples took all possible care in the earliest times of the church, that these sacred books might be read and explained in the assemblies of the faithful, to excite and nourish in the minds of Christians a fervent zeal for the truth, and a firm attachment to piety and virtue. Those who performed the office of interpreters, studied above all things plainness and perspicuity. At the same time it must be acknowledged, that, even in this century, several Christians adopted that absurd custom of darkening the plain words of the Holy Scriptures by insipid and forced allegories. But the general method of teaching the sacred doctrines of religion, was, at this time, most simple, far removed from all the subtle rules of philosophy, and all the precepts of human art. This appears abundantly, not only in the writings of the apostles, but also in all those of the second century, which have survived the ruins of time. Neither did the apostles or their

disciples ever think of collecting into a regular system the principal doctrines of the Christian religion. The beautiful simplicity of these early ages rendered such philosophical niceties unnecessary, and the great study of those who embraced the gospel was rather to express its divine influence in their dispositions and actions, than to examine its doctrines with curiosity.

III. There is indeed extant, a brief summary of the principal doctrines of Christianity in that *form* which bears the name of the *Apostles Creed*, and which, from the fourth century downwards, was generally considered as a production of the apostles. All, however, who have the least knowledge of antiquity, look upon this opinion as destitute of all foundation. There is much more reason in the opinion of those, who think this Creed was not all composed at once, but from small beginnings was imperceptibly augmented in proportion to the growth of heresy, and according to the exigencies and circumstances of the church, from whence it was designed to banish the errors that daily arose.

IV. In the earliest times of the church, all who professed firmly to believe that Jesus was the only redeemer of the world, and who, in consequence of this profession, promised to live in a manner conformable to the purity of his religion, were received among the disciples of Christ. This was all the preparation for *baptism* then required; and a more accurate instruction in the doctrines of Christianity was to be administered to them after it. But when Churches rose to the true God, almost in every nation, this custom was changed. Then none were admitted to baptism, but such as had been previously instructed in the principal points of Christianity, and had also given satisfactory

tory proofs of pious dispositions. Hence arose the distinction between *catechumens*, who were in a state of probation, and *believers*, who were consecrated to God by baptism.

V. The Christians took all possible care to accustom their children to the study of the scriptures, and to instruct them in the doctrines of their holy religion; and schools were every where erected for this purpose from the very commencement of the Christian church. We must not, however, confound the *schools* designed only for children, with the academies of the ancient Christians, erected in several large cities, in which persons of riper years, especially such as aspired to be public teachers, were instructed in the different branches of learning. St. John erected a school of this kind at Ephesus, and one of the same nature was founded by Polycarp at Smyrna. But none of these were in greater repute than that which was established at Alexandria, which was commonly called the *catechetical school*, and is generally supposed to have been erected by St. Mark.

VI. The lives and manners of the Christians in this century are highly celebrated by most authors. And if these encomiums be confined to the greatest part of those, who embraced Christianity in the infancy of the church, they are certainly just. But many run into extremes upon this head, and estimating the lives of all by the illustrious examples of some eminent saints, imagine that every appearance of vice was banished from the first Christian societies. The greatest part of those authors, who have written concerning the primitive Christians, have fallen into this agreeable error. And a gross error indeed it is, as the strongest testimonies evidently prove.

VII. One of the circumstances which contributed chiefly to preserve sanctity in the Christian church, was the right of excluding from thence, such as had been guilty of enormous transgressions. This right was vested in the church, from the earliest period of its existence, by the apostles themselves, and was exercised by each Christian assembly upon its respective members. The rulers denounced the persons whom they thought unworthy of church-communion, and (the people approving,) pronounced the decisive sentence. It was not, however, irrevocable; for such as gave undoubted signs of their sincere repentance, were re-admitted into the church, but in case of a relapse, their second exclusion became absolutely irreversible.

VIII. The first of the controversies which was set on foot in the church, regarded the necessity of observing the law of Moses, and its issue is mentioned by St. Luke in *The Acts of the Apostles*. This controversy was followed by many others, either with the Jews, who were violently attached to the worship of their ancestors, or with the votaries of a wild sort of philosophy, or with such as, mistaking the true genius of the Christian religion, abused it to the encouragement of their vices. St. Paul and the other apostles have, in several places of their writings, mentioned these controversies, but with such brevity, that it is difficult at this distance of time, to come at the true state of the question in these various disputes.

IX. The most important of all these controversies was that, which certain Jewish doctors raised, concerning the means of justification, and the method of salvation pointed out in the word of God. The apostles, wherever they exercised their ministry, had constantly declared all hopes

hopes of acceptance delusive, except such as were founded on Jesus the redeemer, and his all-sufficient *merits*, while the Jewish doctors maintained the *works* of the law to be the true efficient cause of eternal salvation. This sentiment not only led to many other errors, but was also injurious to the glory of the divine Saviour. For those who looked upon a course of life conformable to the law, as a meritorious title to eternal happiness, could not consider Christ as the Saviour of mankind, but only as an eminent prophet. It is not, therefore, surprising, that St. Paul took so much pains in his *Epistle to the Romans*, and in his other writings, to extirpate such a pernicious error.

X. The controversy that had been raised concerning the necessity of observing the ceremonies of the Mosaic law, was determined by the apostles. Their authority, however, respectable as it was, had not its full effect. For the prejudices, which the Jews, especially those who lived in Palestine, entertained in favour of the Mosaic law, were so deeply rooted in their minds, that they could not be thoroughly removed. The force of these prejudices was indeed diminished after the destruction of Jerusalem, but not entirely destroyed.

C H A P. IV.

Concerning the rites and ceremonies used in the church during this century.

I. **T**HE Christian religion was singularly commendable on account of its divine simplicity, which appears from the two fundamental principles on which it was built, viz. *faith* and *charity*. This simplicity was not, however, incompatible

compatible with certain external rites, which, indeed, are necessary in this imperfect state, to keep alive a sense of religion in the minds of men. The rites instituted by Christ himself were only two, and these designed to continue to the end of the church here below, without any variation. These rites were *baptism* and the *holy supper*, which are not to be considered as mere ceremonies, but also as ordinances accompanied with a sanctifying influence upon the heart of true Christians. And we cannot help observing here, that since the divine Saviour thought fit to appoint no more than two plain institutions in his church, this shews us that a number of ceremonies is not essential to his religion, and that he left it to the prudent choice of Christians to establish such as the circumstances of the times might require.

II. There are several circumstances which incline us to think that the apostles appointed for wise reasons, many other external rites in various places. At the same time we are not to imagine that they ever conferred upon any person a perpetual authority, or that they enjoined the same rites in all churches. We learn on the contrary from authentic records, that the Christian worship was, from the beginning, celebrated in a different manner in different places, and that, no doubt, by the orders, or at least with the approbation of the apostles. In these early times it was both wise and necessary, to shew, in the establishment of outward forms of worship, some indulgence to the ancient manners and laws of the respective nations to whom the gospel was preached.

III. From hence it follows, that the opinion of those who maintain that the Jewish rites were adopted *every where*, in the Christian churches, by order of the apostles, is destitute of all foundation.

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In those Christian societies, which were totally or principally composed of Jewish converts, it was natural to retain as much of the Jewish ritual as the genius of Christianity would suffer. But that the same Jewish rites should take place in Christian churches, where there were no Jews, or a very small number, is utterly incredible. In a word, the external forms of worship used in the times of old, must have been regulated according to the character and manners of the different nations on which the light of the gospel arose.

IV. Since then there was such a variety in the ritual of the primitive churches, it must be difficult to give such an account of the worship, manners, and institutions of the ancient Christians, as will agree with what was practised in all those countries where the gospel flourished. There are, notwithstanding, certain laws, whose authority and obligation were indispensable among all Christians. All Christians were unanimous in setting apart the first day of the week, on which the Saviour arose from the dead, for the solemn celebration of public worship. This custom, which was derived from the example of the church of Jerusalem, was founded upon the express appointment of the apostles; and that day was observed universally throughout all the Christian churches. The seventh day of the week was also observed as a festival, not by the Christians in general, but by such churches only as were principally composed of Jewish converts. It appears, moreover, that all the Christian churches observed two great anniversary festivals, the one in memory of Christ's resurrection; and the other to commemorate the descent of the holy Ghost upon the apostles. To these we may add the days on which the blessed martyrs laid down their lives for the truth, which were

were probably dignified with particular solemnities from the earliest times.

V. The places in which the first Christians assembled to celebrate divine worship, were the houses of private persons. But in process of time it became necessary, that these sacred assemblies should be confined to one fixed place. And then, probably, the places of meeting that had formerly belonged to private persons, became the property of the whole Christian community. These few remarks are sufficient to determine that question, *whether the first Christians had churches, or not?* Since if any are pleased to give the name of *church* to a house, or the part of a house, which was appointed as the place of religious worship, it will be readily granted that the most ancient Christians had churches.

VI. In these assemblies the holy scriptures were read, and for that purpose were divided into certain portions or lessons. This was followed by a brief exhortation to the people, in which art gave place to the natural expression of zeal and charity. If any declared themselves extraordinarily animated by the holy spirit, they were permitted to explain successively the divine will, while the others who were present, decided how much authority was to be attributed to what they said. The prayers, which made a considerable part of the public worship, came in at the conclusion of these discourses. To these were added certain hymns, particularly during the celebration of the Lord's supper and the feasts of charity. Such were the essential parts of divine worship, which were observed in all Christian churches.

VII. The prayers of the first Christians were followed by *oblations* of bread, wine, and other things; and hence both the ministers of the church

church and the poor derived their subsistence. Every Christian according to their circumstances, brought with them their gifts, and offered them, as it were, unto the Lord. Of the bread and wine, presented in these offerings, such a quantity was separated from the rest, as was required in the administration of the Lord's supper; this was consecrated by certain prayers pronounced by the bishop alone, to which the people assented by saying *Amen*. The holy supper was distributed by the *deacons*; and this sacred institution was followed by sober repasts, which, from the excellent end they were designed to promote, were called *agapæ*, or *feasts* of charity. Many attempts have been made to fix precisely the nature of these social feasts. But it must be considered, that the customs of the primitive Christians were very different in different countries, and that consequently these feasts, like other institutions, were not every where celebrated in the same manner.

VIII. The sacrament of *baptism* was administered in this century, in places appointed for that purpose, and was performed by immersion of the whole body in the water. At first it was usual that the converts should be baptized and received into the church by those, under whose ministry they had embraced the Christian doctrine. But when the Christian churches were well established, the right of baptizing was vested in the bishop alone. This right, indeed, he conferred upon the *presbyters* and *chorepiscopi*, or *country bishops*, when the bounds of the church were enlarged, reserving to himself the *confirmation* of the baptism. There were, doubtless, several rites and ceremonies observed in this sacrament for the sake of order and decency. Of these, however, it is not easy to give a certain or satisfactory account.

IX. Those

IX. Those who were visited with violent or dangerous disorders, sent, according to the apostle's direction, for the rulers of the church, and, after confessing their sins, were recommended by them to the divine mercy, and also anointed with oil. And there is no reason to doubt of its having been an universal custom among Christians.

X. Neither Christ nor his apostles enacted positive laws concerning *fasting*. But it was the custom of all Christians to join abstinence with their prayers, especially when they were engaged in affairs of extraordinary moment; yet in the most ancient times we find no mention of stated public fasts, except upon the anniversary of Christ's crucifixion. But in process of time, days of fasting were introduced, first by custom, and afterwards by positive appointment; though it is not certain what those days were, nor whether they were observed in the first century. Those, notwithstanding, who affirm that, in the time of the apostles, the fourth and sixth days of the week were observed as fasts, are not, it must be acknowledged, destitute of strong arguments in favour of their opinion.

C H A P. V.

Concerning the divisions and heresies, which troubled the church during this century.

I. **T**HE Christian church was scarcely formed, when, in different places, there started up some, who, not satisfied with the simplicity of that religion which was taught by the apostles, set up a new religion drawn from their own licentious imaginations. This we learn from the writings of the apostles,

apostles, and particularly St. Paul, where we find that some were for forcing the doctrines of Christianity into a conformity with the philosophical systems they had adopted, while others were studious to blend with these doctrines, the customs and traditions of the Jews. Several of these are mentioned by the apostles, such as Hymenæus, and Alexander. The influence of these new teachers was but inconsiderable at first. During the lives of the apostles, their attempts towards the perversion of Christianity were attended with little success. They, however, acquired credit by degrees; and even, from the first dawn of the gospel, laid imperceptibly the foundations of those sects, which produced afterwards such trouble in the Christian church.

II. Among the various sects that troubled the Christian church, the leading one was that of the Gnostics. These self-sufficient philosophers boasted of their being able to restore mankind to the *knowledge (gnosis)* of the supreme being, which had been lost in the world. From several passages of the sacred writings, it appears, that, even in the first century, the general meeting of Christians was deserted, and separate assemblies formed in several places, by persons infected with this heresy; though this pernicious sect was not conspicuous either for its number or its reputation, before the time of Adrian. It is proper to observe here, that under the general appellation of Gnostics are comprehended all those who, in the first ages of Christianity, corrupted the doctrine of the gospel by a mixture of philosophy.

III. Their doctrine relating to practice was of two kinds, and those extremely different from each other. The greatest part of this sect adopted rules of life that were full of austerity, recom-

mended a strict and rigorous abstinence, and prescribed the most severe bodily mortifications. But all the Gnostics were not so severe in their discipline. Some maintained that there was no moral difference in human actions; and thus, confounding right with wrong, they gave a loose rein to all the passions, and asserted the innocence of following blindly all their motions.

IV. But Simon Magus is not to be ranked among the number of those, who corrupted the purity and simplicity of the Christian doctrine. He is rather to be placed in the number of those who were enemies to Christianity. For it is manifest from all the records we have concerning him, that, after his defection from the Christians, he retained not the least attachment to Christ, but opposed himself openly to the divine Saviour, and assumed to himself blasphemously the title of the *supreme power of God*.

V. We may rank among the chief of the Gnostics, the Nicolaitans, whom Christ himself mentions with abhorrence. It is true, he does not reproach them with erroneous opinions, but with the licentiousness of their practice, and the contempt of that solemn law which the apostles had enacted (Acts xv. 29.) against fornication, and the use of *meats* offered to idols.

VI. There is no doubt, but Cerinthus may be placed among the Gnostics. This man was by birth a Jew, and having applied himself to letters and philosophy at Alexandria, attempted, at length, to form a new system of doctrine and discipline by a combination of the doctrines of Christ, with the errors of the Jews and Gnostics. He taught "that the creator of this world, whom he considered also as the sovereign and law-giver of the Jewish people, was a *being* endowed with the

the greatest virtues, and derived his birth from the *Supreme God*; that this *being* fell, by degrees, from his native virtue, and his primitive dignity; that the *Supreme God*, in consequence of this, determined to destroy his empire, and sent upon earth, for this purpose, one of the ever-happy and glorious spirits, whose name was Christ; that this Christ chose for his habitation the person of Jesus, a man of the most illustrious sanctity, the son of Joseph and Mary, and descending in the form of a *dove* entered into him, while he was receiving the baptism of John in the waters of Jordan; that Jesus, after his union with Christ, opposed himself with vigour to the *God of the Jews*, and was, by his instigation, seized and crucified by the Hebrew chiefs; that when Jesus was taken captive, Christ ascended up on high; so that the man Jesus alone was subjected to the pains of an ignominious death." Cerinthus required of his followers, that they should worship the father of Christ, even the Supreme God, in conjunction with the son; that they should abandon the law-giver of the Jews; whom he looked upon as the creator of the world; that they should retain a part of the law given by Moses, but should, nevertheless, employ their principal care, to regulate their lives by the precepts of Christ. To encourage them to this, he promised them the resurrection of this mortal body, after which was to commence a scene of the most exquisite delights, during Christ's earthly reign of a thousand years, which was to be succeeded by a never-ending life in the celestial world.

VII. It has been already observed, that the church was troubled with early disputes concerning the law of Moses. Those, however, who

considered the observance of the Mosaic rites as necessary to salvation, had not, in this century, proceeded so far as to break off communion with such as differed from them in this matter. Therefore they were still regarded as brethren, though of the weaker sort. But when, after the second destruction of Jerusalem, under the emperor Adrian, these zealots for the Jewish rites deserted the ordinary assemblies of Christians, and established separate meetings, then they were numbered with those sects who had departed from the pure doctrine of Christ. Hence the name Nazarenes and Ebionites, by which the judaizing Christians were distinguished from those who looked upon the Mosaic worship and ceremonies, as entirely abolished by the appearance of Christ upon earth.

THE
SECOND CENTURY.

PART I.

The External HISTORY of the CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

Concerning the prosperous events that happened to the church during this century.

I. IN this century the Roman scepter was, for the most part, swayed by princes of a mild and moderate turn. Trajan, though too eagerly bent upon glory, was nevertheless endowed with many virtues, and the predominant lines of his character were clemency and benevolence. Adrian was of a more harsh temper; yet very far from deserving the reputation of a wicked prince. He was of a mixed character, chargeable with several vices, and estimable on account of many excellent qualities. The Antonines were illustrious models of humanity and virtue. Severus himself, in whose disposition such an unexpected change was effected, was, in the beginning of his reign, unjust towards none, and even the Christians were treated by him with equity and mildness.

II. This lenity of the emperors was singularly advantageous to those Christians who lived under the Roman scepter; it generally suspended their sufferings, and alleviated the burthen of their distresses. For, though edicts of a severe nature were issued out against them, and the magistrates, animated by the priests, shed their blood with a cruelty which frequently exceeded the most barbarous laws; yet there was always some remedy that accompanied these evils, and softened their severity. Trajan, however condemnable on account of his conduct towards the Christians, was yet engaged, by the representations that Pliny gave of them, to forbid all *search to be made after them*. He also prohibited all anonymous libels and accusations, by which the Christians had so often been exposed to the greatest sufferings. Antoninus Pius went so far as to enact penal laws against their accusers. And others, by various acts of compassion, defended them from the injurious treatment of the priests and people. Hence it came to pass, that in this century the limits of the church were considerably enlarged, and the number of converts to Christianity prodigiously augmented.

III. It is not easy to point out particularly the countries on which the light of truth first rose in this age. The ancient records that yet remain do not give us information sufficient to determine that matter with certainty. We are, however, assured, that Christ was worshipped as God, almost throughout the whole east, as also among the Germans, Spaniards, Britons, and many other nations. Pantænus, the head of the Alexandrian school, is said to have conveyed to the Indians the knowledge of Christ. But these Indians were indeed Jews, inhabitants of the *Happy Arabia*, whom

whom Bartholomew the apostle had before instructed in Christianity. For Pamænus found among this people the gospel of St. Matthew, which they had received from Bartholomew their first teacher.

IV. The Christian religion, having penetrated among the Gauls, seems to have passed from thence into that part of Germany which was subject to the Romans, and from thence into Britain. Certain German churches, indeed, are ambitious of deriving their origin from St. Peter; the Britons also are willing to believe, that in this century their king Lucius embraced the gospel. But these traditions are extremely doubtful.

V. It is very possible that the light of Christianity may have reached *Transalpine Gaul*, now called France, before the conclusion of the apostolic age, either by the ministry of the apostles themselves, or their immediate successors. But we have no records, that mention, with certainty, the establishment of Christian churches in this part of Europe before the second century. Pothinus, a man of exemplary piety, with Irenæus and others, then laboured in the Christian cause with such success among the Gauls, that churches were established at Lyons and Vienne, of which Pothinus himself was the first bishop.

VI. The writers of this century attribute this rapid progress of Christianity, to the energy of divine truth, to the extraordinary gifts imparted to the first Christians, and the miracles that were wrought by them. But it is beyond doubt, that the pious diligence and zeal, with which many worthy men recommended the sacred writings, and spread them abroad in translations, contributed much to the propagation of the Christian doctrine. Latin versions were multiplied by the labours

labours of the learned with particular diligence, because that language was now universal. Among these versions, that, which was distinguished by the name of the Italic, obtained universally the preference, and was followed by the Syriac, Egyptian, and Æthiopic versions.

VII. Among the obstacles that retarded the progress of Christianity, the calumnies of its enemies were the most considerable. The persons, the characters, and sentiments of the first Christians were most perfidiously misrepresented. Those therefore, who by their *apologetic* writings destroyed the poisonous influence of detraction, rendered, no doubt, signal service to the doctrine of Christ. Nor were the writings of such as combated the ancient Heretics without their use, especially in the early periods of the church. For their extravagant doctrines and gross immoralities were extremely prejudicial to the Christian religion, by disgusting many at whatever carried the Christian name. But when it was known, by the writings of those who defended Christianity, that these heretics were held in aversion, instead of being patronized by the true followers of Christ, then, the clouds that were cast over the religion of Jesus were dispersed.

VIII. It is easier to conceive than to express, how much, the *miraculous powers*, which were displayed in the ministry of the first heralds of the gospel, contributed to enlarge the bounds of the church. And it appears from unexceptionable testimonies, that the extraordinary gifts with which the wisdom of the Most High had so richly endowed the rising church, were in several places continued during this century.

IX. Many place among the effects of a *miraculous power*, the story of the *Christian legion*, who,

who, by their prayers, drew from heaven a refreshing shower upon the army of Marcus Antoninus, ready to perish with thirst, when that emperor was at war with the Marcomanni. This remarkable event (which gave to the Christians, to whom it was attributed, the name of the *thundering legion*, on account of the thunder and lightning that destroyed the enemy, while the shower revived the fainting Romans) has been mentioned by many writers. But whether it was miraculous or not, has been disputed among learned men. It is certain, that the Roman army enclosed by the enemy, and reduced to the most deplorable and even desperate condition by the thirst under which they languished in a parched desert, was revived by a sudden and unexpected rain. It is also certain, that both the Heathens and the Christians, looked upon this event as miraculous; the former attributing it to Jupiter, the latter to Christ, interposing in consequence of their prayers. It is further certain, that a considerable number of Christians served, at this time, in the Roman army, and it cannot be doubted, that in such trying circumstances, they implored the succours of their God and Saviour. It was reasonable then to attribute the deliverance of Antoninus and his army to a miraculous interposition of the true God.

X. The Jews were visited with new calamities, first under Trajan, and then under Adrian, when under the standards of Barcocheba, who gave himself out for the Messiah, they rose in rebellion against the Romans. In consequence of this sedition, prodigious numbers of that miserable people were put to the sword, and a new city, called *Ælia Capitolina*, was raised upon the ruins of Jerusalem, into which no Jew was permitted

permitted to enter. This defeat of the Jews tended to confirm the external tranquillity of the Christian church. For that turbulent nation had hitherto oppressed and vexed the Christians, not only by presenting every where to the Roman magistrates accusations against them, but also by treating them in the most injurious manner in Palestine, and the neighbouring countries, because they refused to succour them against the Romans. But this new calamity put it out of their power to exercise their malignity against the disciples of Jesus.

C H A P. II.

Concerning the calamitous events which happened to the church in this century.

I. **I**N the beginning of this century, there were no laws in force against the Christians, for the senate had annulled the cruel edicts of Nero, and Nerva had abrogated the sanguinary laws of his predecessor Domitian. But, notwithstanding this, a custom prevailed of persecuting the Christians, and even of putting them to death as often as a bloody priesthood, or an outrageous populace, set on by them, demanded their destruction. Hence it happened, that, even under the reign of Trajan, popular clamours were raised against the Christians, many of whom fell victims to the rage of a merciless multitude. Such were the proceedings that happened in Bithynia, under the administration of Pliny the younger, who, upon that occasion, wrote to the emperor to know in what manner he was to conduct himself towards the Christians. The answer which he received from

from Trajan amounted to this, "That the Christians were not to be *officiously sought after*, but that such as were *convicted of an adherence to Christianity* were to be put to death, if they did not return to the religion of their ancestors."

II. This edict of Trajan, being registred among the laws of the Roman empire, set bounds, indeed, to the fury of those that persecuted the Christians, but was the occasion of martyrdom to many. For, as often as a person accused of an adherence to Christianity confessed the truth of the charge, the only alternative was apostasy or death, since a perseverance in the Christian faith was, according to the edict of Trajan, a capital crime. And accordingly the venerable and aged Simeon, son of Cleopas, and bishop of Jerusalem, was by this very law crucified. By the same law was the great and pious Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, ordered by Trajan himself to expire in the Roman theatre, exposed to wild beasts.

III. Such of the Christians as could conceal their profession were indeed sheltered under the law of Trajan, which was a disagreeable restraint upon the heathen priests, who breathed nothing but fury against the disciples of Jesus. The office of an accuser was also become dangerous, and few were disposed to undertake it, so that the sacerdotal craft was now inventing new methods to oppress the Christians. The law of Trajan was, therefore, artfully evaded under the reign of his successor Adrian. The populace, set on by their priests, demanded of their magistrates, with one voice, during the public games, the destruction of the Christians: and the magistrates were too much disposed to indulge them in their request. During these commotions, Serenus Gracianus, proconsul of Asia, represented to the emperor

emperor how barbarous and unjust it was to sacrifice to the fury of a lawless multitude, persons who had been convicted of no crime. Nor was his remonstrance without effect; for Adrian, by an edict, issued out to these magistrates, prohibited the putting the Christians to death, unless they were convicted of crimes committed against the laws; the moderation of the emperor may, perhaps, have been owing to the admirable *apologies* of Quadratus and Aristides, in favour of the Christians. But it was not from the Romans alone, that the disciples of Christ were to feel oppression: Barcochebas, the fictitious king of the Jews, whom Adrian afterwards defeated, vented against them all his fury, because they refused to second his rebellion.

IV. The law of Adrian seemed to cover the Christians from the fury of their enemies, since it rendered them punishable on no other account than the *commission of crimes*. Therefore their enemies invented a new method of attacking them under the reign of Antoninus Pius, even by accusing them of impiety and atheism. This calumny was refuted in an *apology* for the Christians, presented to the emperor by Justin Martyr, in consequence of which this equitable prince ordered that all proceedings against them should be regulated by the law of Adrian. This, however, was not sufficient to suppress the rage of blood-thirsty persecution; for, some time after, on occasion of some earthquakes which happened in Asia, the people renewed their violence against the Christians, whom they considered as the authors of those calamities, and treated consequently in the most cruel manner. The emperor, informed of these barbarous proceedings, addressed an edict to the whole province of Asia, in which he

he denounced capital punishment against such as should, for the future, accuse the Christians, without being able to prove them guilty of any crime.

V. This worthy prince was succeeded by Marcus Aurelius Antoninus the philosopher, whom most writers celebrate on account of his extraordinary wisdom and virtue. It is not, however, in his conduct towards the Christians, that we must look for the reasons of these encomiums; for here, the clemency and justice of that emperor suffer a strange eclipse. He did not, indeed, revoke the edict of Antoninus Pius, or abrogate the laws, which the preceding emperors had enacted in favour of the Christians; but he did what was equally pernicious to them. Without examining their cause, he lent an attentive ear to the most virulent insinuations of their enemies, and more especially to the malignant calumnies of the philosophers, who accused them of the most horrid crimes, and charged them with renewing the feast of Thyestes, and the incestuous amours of the Theban prince. So that if we except that of Nero, there was no reign under which the Christians were more cruelly treated, than under that of Marcus Aurelius; and yet there was no reign under which such numerous *apologies* were published in their behalf. Those which Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, and Tatian drew up upon this occasion are still extant.

VI. This emperor issued out fresh edicts against the Christians; in consequence of these, the magistrates received the accusations of even slaves, and the vilest of the perjured rabble, against the followers of Jesus. And the Christians were put to the most cruel tortures, and were condemned

to meet death in the most barbarous forms, notwithstanding their perfect innocence. But the imperial edicts were so express against inflicting punishment upon such of the Christians as were guilty of no crime, that the corrupt judges who desired their destruction, were obliged to suborn false accusers to charge them with actions that might bring them within the reach of the laws. Hence many fell victims to cruel superstition, seconded by the corruption of a wicked magistracy. Among these victims, there were many men of illustrious piety, and some of eminent learning and abilities, such as the holy and venerable Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, and Justin Martyr, so deservedly renowned for his learning. Many churches, particularly those of Lyons and Vienne, were destroyed during this violent persecution, which raged in the year 177, and will be an indelible stain upon the memory of that prince.

VII. During the reign of Commodus, the Christians suffered very little; no general persecution raged against them; and any cruelties they endured were confined to a small number, who had newly abandoned the Pagan superstitions. But the scene changed towards the latter end of this century, when Severus was emperor. Then Asia, Egypt, and the other provinces were drenched with the blood of martyrs. Those, therefore, are not to be followed, who affirm that the Christians suffered nothing under Severus before the beginning of the third century, which was distinguished by the cruel edicts of this emperor against them. For, as the iniquitous edicts of Trajan and Marcus Antoninus were still in force, there was a door open to the fury of corrupt magistrates, as often as they were pleased to exercise them

them upon the church. It was this series of calamities, under which it groaned towards the conclusion of the second century, which engaged Tertullian to write his *Apology*, and several other books, in defence of the Christians.

VIII. It is easy to account for the calamities with which the disciples of Jesus were loaded, when we consider how they were blackened by the calumnies of the heathen priests, and the other defenders of a corrupt and abominable system of superstition. The horrid charges of which we took notice above, are mentioned by all those who have written in defence of the Christians, and ought to stand always upon record, as a proof both of the weakness and wickedness of their adversaries. Nothing can be more frivolous than the objections which the most famous defenders of paganism opposed to the truth of Christianity; such as desire a convincing proof of this, have only to read the arguments of Celsus on that subject. This philosopher wrote against the Christians during the reign of Adrian, and was admirably refuted, in the following century, by Origen.

P A R T II.

The INTERNAL HISTORY of the CHURCH.

C H A P T E R I.

Concerning the state of letters and philosophy during this century.

I. **U**NDER the reign of Trajan, letters and philosophy came forth from the retreat where they had languished during the tyranny of his predecessors, and were, in some measure, restored to their former lustre. This happy revolution was, indeed, but of a short duration, as it was not supported by the following emperors. Even Marcus Antoninus, who surpassed them all in learning, gave encouragement to the Stoics alone, and, after the example of that supercilious sect, treated the arts and sciences with contempt. And here we see the true reason why the writers of this century are, in general, so much inferior to those of the former, in point of elegance and purity.

II. Yet even in this century, there were, both among the Greeks and Romans, men of eminent abilities, who set off, in the most advantageous manner, the learning of the times in which they lived. Among the learned Grecians, the first place is due to Plutarch, a man of vast erudition, whose knowledge was various, but indigested. There were, likewise, in all the more considerable cities of the Roman empire rhetoricians, sophists, and grammarians, who, by a variety of learned exercises, seemed zealous in forming the youth,

youth, and in rendering them fit to be useful to their country. But the instruction acquired in these schools was more specious than solid; and the youth who received their education in them, distinguished themselves at their entrance upon the active stage of life, more by empty declamation, than by true eloquence. Besides these schools, there were two public academies in the empire, the one at Rome founded by Adrian, in which all the sciences were taught; and the other at Berytus in Phœnicia, which was principally destined for the education of youth in the science of law.

III. Many philosophers of all the different sects flourished at this time. Two there were of such remarkable merit, as rendered them real ornaments to the Stoic philosophy, Marcus Antoninus, and Epictetus. But these two great men had more admirers than followers; for in this century, the Stoical sect was not in esteem, as the rigour and austerity of its doctrine were, by no means, suited to the dissolute manners of the times. The Platonic schools were more frequented, as their precepts were less rigorous and severe. But of all the philosophers, the Epicureans enjoyed the greatest reputation, and had the greatest number of followers, because their opinions tended to encourage the indolent security of a voluptuous and effeminate life.

IV. Towards the conclusion of this century, a new sect of philosophers arose, spread with rapidity throughout the greatest part of the Roman empire, swallowed up almost all the other sects, and was extremely detrimental to the cause of Christianity. Alexandria in Egypt, which had been, for a long time, the seat of learning, gave birth to this new philosophy. Its votaries chose

to be called Platonics, though, far from adhering to all the tenets of Plato, they collected from the different sects, such doctrines as they thought conformable to truth, and formed thereof one general system. What gave this new philosophy a dignity, was, the spirit of candour on which it seemed to be founded. This recommended it particularly to those whose enquiries were accompanied with wisdom and moderation, and who were sick of those arrogant and contentious sects, which required an invariable attachment to their particular systems. And, indeed, nothing could have a more engaging aspect than a set of men, who, abandoning all cavil, professed searching after the truth alone, and were ready to adopt, from all the different systems, such tenets as they thought agreeable to it. From hence also they were called Eclectics.

V. This new species of platonism was embraced by such of the Alexandrian Christians as were desirous to retain, with the profession of the gospel, the dignity of philosophers. It is also said to have had the particular approbation of Athenagoras, Panthænus, Clemens the Alexandrian, and all those who, in this century, were charged with the care of the public school, which the Christians had at Alexandria. These sages were of opinion, that *true philosophy*, the most salutary gift of God to mortals, was scattered in various portions through all the different sects, and that it was, consequently, the duty of every wise man, to gather it from the several corners where it lay dispersed, and to employ it, thus reunited, in the defence of religion. The Christian Eclectics had this also in common with the others, that they preferred Plato to the other philosophers, and looked upon his opinions concerning

concerning God and things invisible, as conformable to the Christian doctrine.

VI. Ammonius Saccas, who taught with the highest applause in the Alexandrian school about the conclusion of this century, laid the foundations of that sect which was distinguished by the name of the New Platonics. This learned man was born of Christian parents, and never gave up entirely the profession of that religion, in which he had been educated. As his genius was vast and comprehensive, so were his projects bold and singular. For he attempted a general coalition of all sects, whether philosophical or religious, and taught a doctrine, which he looked upon as proper to unite them all, the Christians not excepted. And herein lies the difference between this new sect and the Eclectics, who had, before this time, flourished in Egypt. The Eclectics held, that in every sect there was a mixture of good and bad, of truth and falsehood, and accordingly they chose out of each of them, such tenets as seemed to them conformable to truth. Ammonius, on the contrary, maintained, that the great principles of all philosophical and religious truth were to be found, equally, in all sects; that they differed from each other, only in their method of expressing them, and in some opinions of little or no importance; and that, by a proper interpretation of their respective sentiments, they might easily be united into one body. It is further to be observed, that the propensity of Ammonius to singularity, led him to maintain, that all the gentile religions, and even the Christian, were to be explained by the principles of this universal philosophy; but that, in order to this, the fables of the priests were to be removed from Paganism, and the comments of the disciples of Jesus from Christianity.

VII. This

VII. This new species of philosophy, imprudently adopted by Origen and many other Christians, was extremely prejudicial to the cause of the gospel. From hence it was, that the Christian doctors began to involve in the darkness of a vain philosophy some of the principal truths of Christianity, and to add, to the precepts of our Lord, many of their own, which had no foundation in the sacred writings.

VIII. The number of learned men among the Christians, which was small in the preceding century, grew considerably in this. Among these there were few rhetoricians, sophists, or orators. The most part were philosophers attached to the Eclectic system, though they were not all of the same sentiments concerning the utility of philosophy. Those, who were themselves initiated into philosophy, were desirous that others, particularly such as aspired to the offices of bishops or doctors, should apply themselves to the study of it, in order to their being the better qualified for defending the truth, and instructing the ignorant. Others were for banishing all philosophy from the limits of the church, from a notion that it might prove detrimental to religion. Hence the early beginnings of that unhappy contest between *faith* and *reason*, *religion* and *philosophy*, which increased in the succeeding ages, and is prolonged even to our times. Those, who maintained that learning and philosophy were advantageous to the cause of religion, gained, by degrees, the ascendant, and, in consequence thereof, laws were enacted, which excluded the unlearned from the office of public teachers. The opposite side of the question was not, however, without defenders; and the vices of learned men and philosophers contributed much to increase their number.

C H A P. II.

*Concerning the doctors and ministers of the church,
and the form of its government.*

I. **T**HE form of ecclesiastical government was this: one inspector, or *bishop*, presided over each Christian assembly. In this post he was to be provident, attentive to the wants of the church, and careful to supply them. To assist him in this, he formed a council of *presbyters*, which was not confined to any fixed number, and to each of these he distributed his task, and appointed a station, in which he was to promote the interests of the church. To the bishops and presbyters, the ministers, or *deacons*, were subject; and were divided into classes, as the exigencies of the church required.

II. During a great part of this century, the Christian churches were independent on each other, nor were they joined together by any other bonds, but those of charity. Each Christian assembly was a little state, governed by its own laws, approved by the society. But, in process of time, all the Christian churches of a province were formed into one body, which assembled at certain times to deliberate about the common interests of the whole. This institution had its origin among the Greeks: but these associations were not long confined to them; their utility was no sooner perceived, than they were formed in all places where the gospel had been planted. To these assemblies, in which the deputies of several churches consulted together, the name of *synods* was appropriated by the Greeks, and that of *councils* by the Latins; and the laws that

that were enacted in these general meetings were called *canons*, i. e. *rules*.

III. These *councils*, of which we find not the smallest trace before the middle of this century, changed the face of the church, for by them the privileges of the people were diminished, and the authority of the bishops greatly augmented. At their first appearance in these councils, they acknowledged that they were no more than the delegates of their respective churches. But they imperceptibly extended the limits of their authority, and asserted, that Christ had empowered them to prescribe to his people *authoritative rules of faith and manners*. Another effect of these councils was, the gradual abolition of that perfect equality, which reigned among all bishops in the primitive times. For decency required, that some one of the provincial bishops met in council, should be invested with a superior degree of authority; and hence the rights of Metropolitans derive their origin. In the mean time, the bounds of the church were enlarged; the custom of holding councils was followed wherever the gospel reached, and the universal church had the appearance of one vast republic formed by a combination of a great number of little states. This occasioned the creation of a new order of ecclesiastics, who were appointed, in different parts of the world, as heads of the church, to preserve the consistence of that immense body, so widely dispersed throughout the nations. Such was the office of the *patriarchs*, among whom, at length, ambition, being arrived at its most insolent period, formed a new dignity, investing the bishop of Rome, and his successors, with the authority of prince of the patriarchs.

IV. From

IV. From the government of the church, let us turn our eyes to those who maintained its cause by their writings. Among these was Justin, a man of eminent piety and considerable learning, who, from a Pagan philosopher, became a Christian martyr. He had frequented all the different sects of philosophy in an ardent pursuit of truth, and finding, neither among Stoics nor Peripatetics, neither in the Pythagorean nor Platonic schools, any satisfactory account of the perfections of the Supreme Being, and the nature of the human soul, he embraced Christianity on account of the light which it cast upon these interesting subjects. We have yet remaining his two *apologies* in behalf of the Christians, which are deservedly held in high esteem; notwithstanding that, in some passages of them, he betrays a want of acquaintance with ancient history.

Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, a Greek by birth, and probably born of Christian parents, a disciple also of Polycarp, by whom he was sent to preach the gospel among the Gauls, is another of the writers of this century, whose labours were singularly useful to the church. He turned his pen against its internal enemies, by attacking the errors which were adopted by many, as appears by his *five books against heresies*, which are yet preserved in a Latin translation, and are considered as one of the most precious monuments of ancient erudition.

Athenagoras also deserves a place among the estimable writers of this age. He was a philosopher of no mean reputation, and his *apology* for the Christians, as well as his *treatise upon the resurrection*, afford striking proofs of his learning and genius.

The

The works of Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, are more remarkable for their erudition, than for their order and method; this, at least, is true of his *three books in defence of Christianity*, addressed to Autolycus. But the most illustrious writer of this century, and the most justly renowned for his various erudition, was Clemens, the disciple of Pantænus, and the head of the Alexandrian school, destined for the instruction of the catechumens. His *Stromata*, *Pedagogue*, and *Exhortation*, addressed to the Greeks, abundantly shew the extent of his learning and the force of his genius; though he is neither to be admired for the exactness of his ideas, nor for the perspicuity of his style.

Hitherto we have made no mention of the Latin writers, who employed their pens in the Christian cause. And, indeed, the only one of any note in this century, is Tertullian, by birth a Carthaginian, who, having first embraced the profession of the law, became afterwards a presbyter of the church. He was a man of extensive learning, of a fine genius, and highly admired for his elocution in the Latin tongue. We have several works of his yet remaining, which were designed to explain and defend the truth, and to nourish pious affections in the hearts of Christians.

C H A P. III.

*Concerning the doctrine of the Christian church,
in this century.*

I. **T**HE Christian system, as it was hitherto taught, preserved its native and beautiful simplicity. The public teachers inculcated no other doctrines, than those that are contained in, what is called, the *Apostles Creed*: and, in the method of illustrating them, all vain subtilties, every thing that was beyond the reach of common capacities, were avoided. At this time, there was not the least controversy about those capital doctrines which were afterwards so keenly debated; and the bishops were, for the most part, remarkable rather for their piety and zeal, than for their learning.

II. But this venerable simplicity was not of long duration; its beauty was gradually effaced by the laborious efforts of human learning, and the subtilties of imaginary science. Several tenets of a chimerical philosophy were incorporated into the Christian system. This disadvantageous change was chiefly owing to pride. Certain learned men thought it a fine accomplishment to be able to express the precepts of Christ in the language of *philosophers, civilians, and rabbins*. And there seemed to be a necessity of having recourse to logical definitions and nice distinctions, in order to confound the sophistical arguments of the infidels.

III. But, however the doctrines of the gospel may have been abused by the interpretations of different sects, yet all were unanimous in regarding the holy Scriptures, as the rule of faith and

manners; and hence that laudable and pious zeal of adapting them to general use. We have mentioned already the translations that were made of them into different languages, and it will not be improper to say something here concerning those who employed their labours in explaining them. Pantæus, the head of the Alexandrian school, was probably the first, who made a version of the sacred writings. Clemens the Alexandrian wrote upon the *canonical epistles*; and in a compendious manner on almost all the sacred writings. The *harmony of the Evangelists*, composed by Tatian, is yet extant. But the *exposition of the Revelation*, by Justin Martyr, and of the *four gospels*, by Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, are all lost.

IV. The controversial writers, who shone in this century, had three different sorts of adversaries to combat; the Jews, the Pagans, and those, who, in the bosom of Christianity, corrupted its doctrines. Justin Martyr and Tertullian embarked in a controversy with the Jews. Of those who managed the cause of Christianity against the Pagans, some performed this important task by composing *apologies* for the Christians; and others by addressing pathetic exhortations to the Gentiles. All these writers attacked, with judgment, dexterity, and success, the Pagan superstition, and also defended the Christians, in a victorious manner, against all the calumnies of their enemies. As to those who directed their efforts against the heretics, their number was prodigious, though few of their writings have come down to our times. Irenæus refuted the whole tribe, in a work destined solely for that purpose. Clemens, Tertullian, and Justin Martyr, wrote also against all the sectaries; but the work of the last, upon that subject, is not extant.

V. The

V. The cause of Christianity suffered deeply by a capital error which was received in this century. Jesus Christ prescribed to all his disciples one and the same rule of life and manners. But certain Christian doctors were induced to maintain, that Christ had established a *double rule of sanctity*, for two different orders of Christians. Of these *rules* the *one* was ordinary, the *other* extraordinary; the *one* of a lower dignity, the *other* more sublime; the *one* for persons in the active scenes of life, the *other* for those in a sacred retreat. In consequence of this wild system, they divided into two parts, all the moral doctrines and instructions in Scripture. One of these divisions they called *precepts*, and the other *counsels*. They gave the name of *precepts* to those laws, that were universally obligatory upon all orders of men; and that of *counsels* to those that related to Christians of a more sublime rank, who breathed after an intimate communion with the Supreme Being.

VI. This *double doctrine* produced a new set of men, who made profession of uncommon sanctity, and declared their resolution of obeying all the *counsels* of Christ. They looked upon themselves as prohibited the use of things, which it was lawful for other Christians to enjoy, such as *wine, flesh, matrimony, and commerce*. They thought it their duty to extenuate the body by watchings, abstinence, labour, &c. They looked for felicity in solitary retreats in desert places. These persons were called Ascetics.

VII. A natural account of the origin of these religious severities may be drawn from the genius of the people by whom they were first practised. It was in Egypt that this morose discipline had its rise; and it is observable, that that country

has, in all times, abounded with persons of a melancholy complexion, and produced, in proportion to its extent, more gloomy spirits than any other part of the world. It was here that the Essenes, that gloomy sect, dwelt principally before the coming of Christ; as also many others of the Ascetic tribe, who, led by a certain melancholy turn of mind, withdrew themselves from human society, and from all the innocent comforts of life. From Egypt this unsociable discipline passed into Syria and the neighbouring countries; and from thence, in process of time, reached to the European nations. Hence that train of austere and superstitious vows and rites that cast a veil over the beauty and simplicity of the Christian religion. Hence the celibacy of the priests, the rigour of penances and mortifications, the swarms of monks that refused their talents and labours to society.

VIII. As the boundaries of the church were enlarged, the number of vicious persons who entered into it, were proportionably increased, as appears from the many complaints that we find in the writers of this century. Several methods were made use of to stem the torrent of iniquity. *Excommunication* was peculiarly employed to prevent or punish the most heinous crimes; and the crimes, esteemed such, were *murder, idolatry, and adultery*. In some places the commission of any of these sins cut off irrevocably the criminal from all church-communion: in others, after a long and painful course of discipline, they were re-admitted into the bosom of the church.

IX. The form used in the exclusion of heinous offenders from the society of Christians was, at first, extremely simple. A small number of plain rules made up the whole of this solemn institution

tion, which, however, was imperceptibly altered by an addition of a vast multitude of rites. Those who have any acquaintance with the reasons, that obliged the Christians of ancient times to be careful in restraining vice, will readily grant that it was incumbent upon the rulers of the church to render the restraints upon iniquity more severe. They will justify the rulers of the primitive church in refusing to restore excommunicated members to their forfeited privileges, before they had given incontestable marks of their repentance.

C H A P. IV.

Of the ceremonies used in the church during this century.

I. **T**HERE is no institution so excellent which the corruption and folly of man will not in time alter for the worse, and load with additions foreign to its nature and original design. Such was the fate of Christianity. In this century many unnecessary rites and ceremonies were added to the Christian worship. These changes, while they destroyed the beautiful simplicity of the gospel, were pleasing to the gross multitude, who are more delighted with the splendor of external institutions, than with the native charms of rational and solid piety. But other reasons may be added to this. There is some probability, that the bishops augmented the number of religious rites, by way of accommodation to the prejudices both of Jews and Heathens. Both Jews and Heathens were accustomed to a vast variety of magnificent ceremonies in their religious service. And as they considered these rites as an essential part of religion, it was natural they should behold, with
indifference,

indifference, and even with contempt, the simplicity of the Christian worship which was destitute of them. To remove this prejudice, the bishops thought it necessary to increase the number of ceremonies, to render the public worship more striking to the outward senses.

II. This addition of external rites was also designed to remove the calumnies, which the Jewish and Pagan priests cast upon the Christians, on account of the simplicity of their worship, esteeming them little better than Atheists, because they had no *temples, altars, victims*, nor any thing of external pomp. The rulers of the church adopted, therefore, certain external ceremonies, that they might refute the reproaches of their adversaries. This, it must be confessed, was a very awkward, and, indeed, pernicious stratagem; it was obscuring the native lustre of the gospel, in order to extend its influence, and making it lose, in point of real excellence, what it gained in point of popular esteem.

III. The profound respect that was paid to the Greek and Roman *mysteries*, and the extraordinary sanctity that was attributed to them, was a further circumstance that induced the Christians to give their religion a *mystic air*, in order to put it upon an equal foot with that of the Pagans. For this purpose, they gave the name of *mysteries* to the institutions of the gospel, particularly the holy sacrament. They used in that sacred institution, as also in that of baptism, several of the terms employed in the heathen *mysteries*, and proceeded so far, at length, as even to adopt some of the rites and ceremonies of which these renowned *mysteries* consisted. This imitation began in the eastern provinces; but after the time of Adrian, who first introduced the Myste-
ries

ries among the Latins, it was followed by the Christians, who dwelt in the western parts of the empire. A great part, therefore, of the service of the church, in this century, had the air of the heathen mysteries, and resembled them in many particulars.

IV. The first Christians assembled for divine worship, in *private houses*, in *caves*, and in *vaults*, where the dead were buried. Their meetings were on the *first day of the week*, and, in some places, they assembled also upon the *seventh*, which was celebrated by the Jews. The hour of the day varied according to the different times and circumstances of the church; but it was generally in the evening after sun-set, or in the morning before the dawn. During these sacred meetings, prayers were repeated, the holy scriptures were publicly read, short discourses, upon the duties of Christians, were addressed to the people, hymns were sung, and a portion of the *oblations*, presented by the faithful, was employed in the celebration of the Lord's supper and the feasts of charity.

V. The Christians, of this century, celebrated anniversary festivals in commemoration of the death and resurrection of Christ, and of the effusion of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles. The day which was observed as the anniversary of Christ's death, was called the *paschal day*, or passover, because it was looked upon to be the same with that on which the Jews celebrated the feast of that name. In the manner of observing this solemn day, the Christians of the Lesser Asia differed from the rest, and in a more especial manner from those of Rome. They both, indeed, fasted during the *great week* (so that was called in which Christ died) and afterwards celebrated,

brated, like the Jews, a sacred feast, in memory of our Saviour's last supper. But the Asiatic Christians kept this feast on the fourteenth day of the first Jewish month, at the time that the Jews celebrated their passover, and, three days after, commemorated the resurrection of the triumphant Redeemer. They affirmed, they had derived this custom from the apostles John and Philip, and pleaded, moreover, the example of Christ himself, who held his *paschal feast* on the same day that the Jews celebrated their *passover*. The western churches observed a different method. They celebrated their *paschal* feast on the night that preceded the anniversary of Christ's resurrection, and thus connected the commemoration of the Saviour's crucifixion, with that of his victory over death and the grave. And they pleaded the authority of St. Peter and St. Paul, as a justification of their conduct.

VI. The Asiatic rule for keeping the *paschal feast*, was attended with two great inconveniences: first, as the Asiatics celebrated their festival the same day that Christ is said to have ate the paschal lamb with his disciples, this occasioned an inevitable interruption in the fast of the *great week*: secondly, as they celebrated the memory of Christ's resurrection, precisely the third day after their paschal supper, it happened, for the most part, that this great festival (to which we give the name of *Easter*) was held on other days of the week than the *first*. This was extremely displeasing to the greatest part of the Christians, to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord, on any day but *Sunday*, as that was the day on which this glorious event happened. Hence arose contentions between the Asiatic and western Christians. About the middle of this century,

tury, during the reign of Antoninus Pius, the venerable Polycarp came to Rome to confer with Anicet, bishop of that see, upon this matter, with a view to terminate the dispute. But this conference, though conducted with great decency and moderation, was without effect. Polycarp and Anicet were only agreed in this, that the bonds of charity were not to be broken; but they continued each in their former sentiments.

VII. Towards the conclusion of this century, Victor, bishop of Rome, took it into his head to force the Asiatic Christians to follow the rule which was observed by the western churches. Accordingly, he wrote an imperious letter to the Asiatic prelates, commanding them to imitate the example of the western Christians. The Asiatics answered this lordly summons by the pen of Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, who declared in their name, that they would by no means depart from the custom handed down to them by their ancestors. Victor, exasperated by this resolute answer of the Asiatic bishops, broke communion with them, pronounced them unworthy of the name of his brethren, and excluded them from all fellowship with the church of Rome. This excommunication, indeed, extended no further; nor could it cut off the Asiatic bishops from communion with the other churches, whose bishops were far from approving the conduct of Victor. The progress of this dissension was stopped by the wise remonstrances, which Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, addressed to the Roman prelate, in which he shewed him the imprudence and injustice of the step he had taken, and also by the long letter which the Asiatic Christians wrote in their own justification. In consequence therefore of this cessation of arms, the combatants retained each their

their own customs, until the fourth century, when the council of Nice abolished that of the Asiatics, and rendered the time of the celebration of Easter the same through all the Christian churches.

VIII. In these times, the sacrament of the Lord's supper was celebrated on all Sundays, and the ceremonies observed upon that occasion were such as follow: a part of the bread and wine, which was presented among the other *oblations* of the faithful, was separated from the rest, and consecrated by the prayers of the bishop. The wine was mixed with water, and the bread was divided into several portions. A part of the consecrated bread and wine was carried to the sick or absent members of the church, as a testimony of fraternal love, sent to them by the whole society. It was administered to infants during this century. The *feasts of charity* followed the celebration of the Lord's supper.

IX. The sacrament of *baptism* was administered publicly twice every year, at the festivals of Easter and Pentecost, or Whitsuntide, either by the *bishop*, or the *presbyters*, in consequence of his appointment. The persons that were to be baptized, after they had repeated the *Creed*, confessed and renounced their sins, and particularly the *devil*, and his works, were immersed under water, and received into Christ's kingdom by a solemn invocation of *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, according to the express command of our blessed Lord. After baptism, they received the *sign of the cross*, were *anointed*, and, by *prayers and imposition of hands*, solemnly commended to the mercy of God, and dedicated to his service; in consequence of which they received *milk and honey*, which concluded the ceremony.

Adult

Adult persons were prepared for baptism by abstinence, prayer, and other pious exercises. It was to answer for them that sponsors or godfathers were first instituted, though they were afterwards admitted also in the baptism of infants.

C H A P. V.

Concerning the heresies and divisions, which troubled the church during this century.

I. **T**HE body of judaizing Christians, which set Christ and Moses upon an equal foot in point of authority, was afterwards divided into two sects, extremely different both in their rites and in their opinions, and distinguished by the names of Nazarenes and Ebionites. The former were not placed by the ancient Christians in the heretical register; but the latter were. The term Nazarenes was not originally the name of a sect, but that which distinguished the disciples of Jesus in general. Therefore it was not considered as a mark of contempt. But those, who, after their separation from their brethren, retained the title of Nazarenes, differed much from the true disciples of Christ. "They refused to abandon the ceremonies prescribed by the law of Moses, but were far from attempting to impose them upon the Gentile Christians; they rejected also all those additions that were made to the Mosaic institutions, by the Pharisees and the doctors of the law;" and from hence we see the reason why the greatest part of the Christians treated the Nazarenes with more than ordinary gentleness.

II. Though the Ebionites believed the celestial mission of Christ, and his participation of a divine nature, yet they regarded him as a man born

born of Joseph and Mary, according to the ordinary course of nature. They, moreover, asserted, that the ceremonial law was obligatory upon all; and that the observance of it was essential to salvation. Nor were they only attached to the rites instituted by Moses; they received, with equal veneration, the superstitions of their ancestors, and the ceremonies and traditions which the Pharisees added to the law.

III. Saturninus of Antioch is one of the first Gnostic chiefs mentioned in history. He held the doctrine of *two principles*, from whence proceeded all things; the *one a wise and benevolent deity*; and the other, *matter, a principle essentially evil*, and which he supposed under the superintendence of a certain intelligence of a malignant nature. Saturninus taught these extravagant doctrines in Syria, but principally at Antioch, and drew after him many disciples by the appearance of extraordinary virtue.

IV. Cerdo the Syrian, and Marcion, son to the bishop of Pontus, may be considered as the heads of a new sect which bears their names. Amidst the doubts that render so uncertain the history of these two men, the following fact is incontestable, *viz.* That Cerdo had been spreading his doctrine at Rome before the arrival of Marcion there; and that the latter having, through his own misconduct, forfeited a place, to which he aspired in the church of Rome, attached himself, through resentment, to the impostor Cerdo, and propagated his doctrines with astonishing success. "After the example of the oriental doctors, they held the existence of *two principles*, the one perfectly good, and the other perfectly evil. Between these, they imagined an *intermediate kind of deity*, neither perfectly good, nor perfectly evil, but of a mixed nature, and

and so far just and powerful, as to administer rewards and inflict punishments. This *middle deity* is the creator of this inferior world, and the *God and legislator of the Jewish nation*; he wages perpetual war with the *evil principle*; and both the one and the other aspire to the place of the Supreme Being, and attempt subjecting to their authority all the inhabitants of the world." The rule of manners, which Marcion prescribed to his followers, was excessively austere, containing an express prohibition of wedlock, of the use of wine, flesh, and of all the external comforts of life. But notwithstanding the rigour of this severe discipline, great numbers embraced it.

V. Bardesanes, native of Edessa, was a man of a very acute genius, and acquired a shining reputation by his writings. Seduced by the fantastic charms of the oriental philosophy, he adopted it with zeal, but, at the same time, with certain modifications, that rendered his system less extravagant, than that of the Marcionites, against whom he wrote a very learned treatise. The sum of his doctrine is as follows: "There is a Supreme God, pure and benevolent, absolutely free from all evil and imperfection; and there is also a *Prince of Darkness*, the fountain of all evil, disorder, and misery. The Supreme God created the world without any mixture of evil; he gave existence also to its inhabitants, who came out of his forming hand, pure and incorrupt, endued with subtil ethereal bodies and spirits of a celestial nature. But when, in process of time, the *Prince of Darkness* had enticed men to sin, then the Supreme God permitted them to fall into sluggish and gross bodies, formed of corrupt matter by the *evil principle*; he permitted also the depravation which this malignant

being introduced both into the natural and the moral world, designing, by this permission, to punish the degeneracy and rebellion of an apostate race; and hence proceeds the perpetual conflict between reason and passion in the mind of man. It was on this account, that Jesus descended from the upper regions, clothed not with a real, but a celestial body, and taught mankind to subdue that body of corruption which they carry about them in this mortal life; and, by *abstinence, fasting, and contemplation*, to disengage themselves from the dominion of that *malignant matter*, which chained down the soul to low and ignoble pursuits. Those, who hear the voice of this divine instructor, shall, after the dissolution of this terrestrial body, mount up to the mansions of felicity, clothed with æthereal bodies." Such was the doctrine of Bardesanes, who afterwards abandoned the chimerical part of this system, and returned to a better mind.

VI. Tatian, by birth an Assyrian, and a disciple of Justin martyr, is more distinguished, by the ancient writers, on account of his genius and learning, and the austerity of his life and manners, than by any errors which he taught his followers. It appears, however, that Tatian looked upon *matter* as the fountain of all evil, and therefore recommended, in a particular manner, the mortification of the body; that he distinguished the creator of the world from the Supreme Being; and corrupted the Christian religion with several tenets of philosophy. He had a great number of followers, who were, after him, called Tatianists, but were, more frequently distinguished from other sects by names relative to the austerity of their manners.

VII. Basilides has generally obtained the first place among the Egyptian Gnostics. "He acknowledged

acknowledged the existence of one Supreme God, perfect in goodness and wisdom, who produced from his own substance seven beings, or æons, of a most excellent nature. Two of these æons, called *Dynamis* and *Sophia*, (i. e. *power* and *wisdom*) engendered the angels of the highest order. These angels formed an heaven for their habitation, and brought forth other angelic beings, of a nature somewhat inferior to their own. Many other generations of angels followed these, new heavens were also created, until the number of angelic orders, and of their respective heavens, amounted to *three hundred and sixty-five*, and thus equalled the days of the year. All these are under the empire of an omnipotent Lord, whom Basilides called Abraxas." This word (which was certainly in use among the Egyptians before his time) contains numeral letters to the amount of 365, and thereby expresses the number of heavens and angelic orders above-mentioned. "The inhabitants of the lowest heavens, which touched upon the borders of the eternal, malignant, and self-animated *matter*, conceived the design of forming a world from that confused mass, and of creating an order of beings to people it. This design was carried into execution, and was approved by the Supreme God, who, to the animal life, with which only the inhabitants of this new world were at first endowed, added a reasonable soul, giving, at the same time, to the angels, the empire over them."

VIII. Carpocrates, who was also of Alexandria, carried the Gnostic blasphemies to a still more enormous degree of extravagance. He maintained the eternity of a *corrupt matter*, and the creation of the world from thence by angelic powers, as also the divine origin of souls un-

happily imprisoned in mortal bodies. But beside these, he propagated other sentiments of a horrid kind. He asserted that Jesus was born of Joseph and Mary, according to the ordinary course of nature, and was distinguished from the rest of mankind by nothing but his superior fortitude and greatness of soul. His doctrine also, with respect to practice, was licentious in the highest degree; for he not only allowed his disciples a full liberty to sin, but recommended to them a vicious course of life, as a matter both of obligation and necessity, asserting, that eternal salvation was only attainable by those who had committed all sorts of crimes, and had filled up the measure of iniquity.

IX. Valentine, who was likewise an Egyptian by birth, was eminently distinguished by the extent of his fame, and the multitude of his followers. His sect, which took rise at Rome, grew up to a state of vigour in the isle of Cyprus, and spread itself through Asia, Afric, and Europe, with an amazing rapidity. The principles of Valentine were, generally speaking, the same with those of the Gnostics, yet in many things he entertained opinions that were particular to himself. "He placed, for instance, in the *pleroma* (so the Gnostics called the habitation of the deity) thirty *æons*, of which the one half were male, and the other female. To these he added four others, which were of neither sex, *viz.* *Horus*, who guarded the borders of the *pleroma*, *Christ*, the *Holy Ghost*, and *Jesus*. The youngest of the *æons*, called *Sophia*, (i. e. wisdom) conceived an ardent desire of comprehending the nature of the Supreme Being, and, by the force of this propensity, brought forth a daughter, named *Achamoth*. *Achamoth*, being exiled from the *pleroma*,
fell

fell down into the rude and undigested mass of matter, to which she gave a certain arrangement; and, by the assistance of Jesus, produced the *demiurge*, the lord and creator of all things. This *demiurge* separated the subtil matter from the grosser; out of the former he created the superior world, or the visible heavens; and out of the latter he formed the inferior world, or this terraqueous globe. He also made man, in whose composition the subtil and also the grosser matter were both united, and that in equal portions; but *Achamoth*, the mother of *demiurge*, added to these two substances, of which the human race was formed, a *spiritual and celestial substance*." This is the sum of that intricate and tedious fable, that the extravagant brain of Valentine imposed upon the world. But, though he explained the origin of the world in a more subtil manner than the other Gnostics, yet he did not differ from them in reality. His imagination was more wild than that of his brethren, and this is manifest in the whole of his doctrine, which is no more than gnosticism, set out with some supernumerary fringes.

X. These sects may be regarded as the offspring of philosophy. But they were succeeded by one of another kind. It was formed by Montanus, an obscure man, who lived in a Phrygian village, called Pepuza. He made no attempts upon the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, but only declared, that he was sent with a divine commission to give to the moral precepts delivered by Christ and his apostles the finishing touch that was to bring them to perfection. He inculcated the necessity of multiplying fasts; prohibited second marriages; maintained that the church should refuse absolution to those who had fallen into

enormous sins; and condemned all care of the body, especially all nicety in dress, and all female ornaments. He looked upon those Christians as guilty of a most heinous transgression, who saved their lives by flight from the persecuting sword, or who ransomed them by money from the hands of their cruel and mercenary judges. Montanus, first by a decree of certain assemblies, and afterwards by the voice of the whole church, was separated from the body of the faithful. It is, however, certain, that the very severity of his doctrines gained him the esteem of many, who were far from being of the lowest order. The most eminent among these were Priscilla and Maximilla, who fell with a high degree of warmth and zeal into the visions of their fanatical chief, prophesied like him, and imitated the pretended *paraclete* in all the variety of his extravagance. Hence it became an easy matter for Montanus to erect a new church, which was first established at Pepuza, and afterwards spread abroad through Asia, Africa, and a part of Europe. The most eminent of all his followers was Tertullian, a man of great learning and genius, but of a melancholy natural temper. This great man, by adopting the sentiments of Montanus, and maintaining his cause with vehemence, in a multitude of books written upon that occasion, has shown a spectacle of the deviations of which human nature is capable, even in those, in whom it seems to have approached the nearest to perfection.

XI. Such is the account which is generally given of Montanus. But I have frequently been in doubt, whether he was not one of the wisest and holiest men who was then in the Christian church! And whether his real fault was not, the bearing a faithful testimony of the general apostacy from Christian holiness.

THE
THIRD CENTURY.

PART I.

The External HISTORY of the CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

Which contains the prosperous events that happened to the church during this century.

I. **T**HAT the Christians suffered, in this century, calamities of the most dreadful kind, is a matter that admits of no debate; nor was there any period in which they were not exposed to perpetual dangers. For not to mention the fury of the people set in motion by their licentious priests, the evil came from a higher source; the magistrates, notwithstanding the laws in favour of the Christians, had it in their power to pursue them with all sorts of vexations, as often as avarice, cruelty, or superstition roused the spirit of persecution in their breasts. Yet it is certain, the rights and privileges of the Christians were multiplied in this century, more than many imagine. In the army, at court, and, indeed, in all the orders of the nation, there was a considerable

considerable number of Christians, who lived unmolested; and what is still more, the profession of Christianity was no obstacle to preferment under most of the emperors. It is also certain, that the Christians had, in many places, houses where they assembled for divine worship, and that, with the knowledge and connivance of the magistrates. And it is manifest, that some of the emperors were favourably inclined towards the Christians, and were far from having an aversion to their religion.

II. Caracalla was proclaimed emperor in the year 211, and, during the six years of his government, he neither oppressed the Christians himself, nor permitted any others to treat them with cruelty. Heliogabalus also, though in other respects an infamous prince, shewed no marks of bitterness to them. His successor, Alexander Severus, who was a prince distinguished by the most excellent virtues, did not, indeed, abrogate the laws that had been enacted against the Christians; and this is the reason why we have some examples of martyrdom under his administration. It is nevertheless certain, that he shewed them, upon every occasion, the most undoubted marks of benignity; nay, he is said to have gone so far as to pay a certain sort of worship to the divine author of our religion. This his inclination towards the Christians was probably owing, at first, to the instructions of his mother Julia Mammæa, for whom he had a high love and veneration. Julia had favourable sentiments of the Christian religion; and, being once at Antioch, sent for Origen from Alexandria, to enjoy his conversation and instructions. Those who assert that Julia, and her son Alexander, embraced the Christian religion, have no sufficient proof

proof of this fact; though we may affirm that this virtuous prince looked upon Christianity as meriting toleration and favour from the state, and considered its author as worthy of a place among those who have been distinguished by their sublime virtues.

III. Under Gordian, the Christians lived in tranquillity. His successors the Philips, father and son, proved so favourable to them, that these two emperors passed, in the opinion of many, for Christians. Gallienus, and some other emperors of this century, if they did not favour the progress of Christianity, yet neither did they oppress its followers.

IV. This clemency which the followers of Jesus experienced from those of imperial dignity, must be placed among those human means, that contributed to multiply the number of Christians. Other causes, however, both *divine* and *human*, must be added. Among the first, we reckon that *especial* and *interposing providence*, which, by dreams and visions presented to the minds of many, who were either inattentive to the Christian doctrine, or its professed enemies, touched their hearts with a conviction of the truth, and engaged them without delay, to profess themselves the disciples of Christ. To this may be added, the healing of diseases, and other miracles, which many Christians were yet enabled to perform. The number of miracles was, however, much less in this than in the preceding century.

V. If we turn our view to the human means that contributed, at this time, to multiply the numbers of Christians, we shall find a great variety of causes contributing to this happy purpose. Among these must be reckoned the translations
of

of the sacred writings into various languages, the zeal and labours of Origen in spreading abroad copies of them every where, and the different works that were published by pious men, in defence of the gospel. We may add, that the acts of beneficence and liberality, performed by the Christians, even towards those whose religious principles they abhorred, had a great influence in attracting the esteem and removing the prejudices of many. The worshippers of the Pagan deities must have been destitute of every generous affection, if the view of that boundless charity, which the Christians exercised towards the poor, the love they expressed even to their enemies, the tender care they took of the sick, the humanity they discovered in the redemption of captives, had not touched their hearts, and rendered them more favourable to the disciples of Jesus.

VI. The limits of the church were extended in this century, but it is not certain in what manner, by what persons, or in what parts of the world. Origen, invited from Alexandria by an Arabian prince, converted a tribe of wandering Arabs to the Christian faith. The Goths, a fierce and warlike people, who inhabited the countries of Mysia and Thrace, received the knowledge of the gospel by the means of certain Christian doctors sent from Asia. The holy lives of these venerable teachers, and the miraculous powers with which they were endowed, attracted the esteem even of a people educated to nothing but plunder; and their authority grew so great, that a great part of this barbarous people became the disciples of Christ.

VII. The Christian assemblies, founded in Gaul in the preceding century, were few in number,

number, and of little extent; but both their number and their extent were considerably increased from the time of the emperor Decius. Under his reign Dionysius, Trophimus, Saturninus, Martial, men of exemplary piety, passed into this province, and, amidst dangers and trials of various kinds, erected churches at Paris, Tours, Arles, and several other places. This was followed by a rapid progress of the gospel among the Gauls, as the disciples of these pious teachers spread, in a short time, the knowledge of Christianity through the whole country. We must also place in this century the origin of several German churches, such as those of Cologne, Treves, Metz, and others.

C H A P. II.

Concerning the calamitous events which happened to the church in this century.

I. **I**N the beginning of this century, the Christian church suffered calamities of various kinds throughout the empire. These sufferings increased in a terrible manner, in consequence of a law made in the year 203, by the emperor Severus, (who, in other respects, was no enemy to the Christians,) by which every subject of the empire was prohibited to change the religion of his ancestors for that of the Christian or Jewish. This law was most prejudicial to the Christians; for, though it did not formally condemn them, yet it induced rapacious and unjust magistrates to persecute even unto death the poorer sort among the Christians, that thus the richer might be led to purchase their safety at an expensive rate.

Hence

Hence many of the disciples of Christ, in several parts of Asia and Africa, were put to death. Among these Leonidas the father of Origen, Perpetua and Felicitas, (whose *acts* are come down to our times,) Potamiena, Marcella, and other martyrs of both sexes, acquired an illustrious name by the magnanimity with which they endured the most cruel sufferings.

II. From the death of Severus to the reign of Maximin, the condition of the Christians was in some places prosperous, and in all supportable. But with Maximin the face of affairs changed. This unworthy emperor, having animated the Roman soldiers to assassinate Alexander Severus, ordered the bishops whom he knew Alexander had always treated as his friends, to be seized and put to death. During his reign the Christians suffered in the most barbarous manner; for, though the edict of this tyrant extended only to the bishops and leaders of the church, yet its effects reached much further; as it animated the priests, the magistrates, and the multitude against Christians of every rank and order.

III. This storm was succeeded by a calm, which the Christians enjoyed for many years. But the accession of Decius Trajan to the imperial throne, in the year 249, raised a new tempest which fell in a dreadful manner upon the church. For this emperor, from a violent zeal for the superstition of his ancestors, published most cruel edicts, by which the prætors were ordered upon pain of death, either to extirpate the whole body of Christians, or to force them by torments to return to the Pagan worship. Hence, in all the provinces of the empire, multitudes of Christians were, during the space of two years, put to death by the most horrid punishments. The most unhappy

happy circumstance of all these cruelties was, their fatal influence upon the constancy of many of the sufferers; for a great number of Christians dismayed, not at the approach of death, but at those dreadful and lingering torments, which a barbarous magistracy had prepared, fell from the profession of their faith, and secured themselves from punishment, either by offering sacrifices, by burning incense before the images of the gods, or by purchasing certificates from the Pagan priests. Hence arose the opprobrious names of *Sacrificati*, given to those who sacrificed; *Thurificati*, to those who burned incense; and *Libellatici*, to those who produced certificates.

IV. This defection was the occasion of great commotions in the church, and produced debates of a very delicate nature. For those that had fallen from their Christian profession, were desirous to be restored to church-communion, without submitting to the usual course of penitential discipline. The bishops were divided upon this matter: some were for shewing indulgence, others opposed it. In Egypt and Africa, many interested the martyrs in their behalf, and received from them *letters of reconciliation and peace*, i. e. a formal act, by which they (the martyrs) declared, in their last moments, that they desired they should be restored to their place among the brethren. Some bishops re-admitted with too much facility, apostates who produced such testimonies as these. But Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, a man of severe wisdom, and great dignity of character, acted in quite another way. He opposed with vigour this unreasonable lenity, and set limits to the efficacy of these letters of reconciliation. Hence arose a keen dispute between him and the martyrs, presbyters, and lapsed, se-

conded by the people ; and yet, notwithstanding this multitude of adversaries, the venerable bishop came off victorious.

V. Gallus, the successor of Decius, and Volusianus, son of the former, re-animated the flame of persecution. And, besides the sufferings which the Christians had to undergo in consequence of their cruel edicts, they were also involved in the public calamities that prevailed at this time, and suffered grievously from a terrible pestilence, which spread desolation through many provinces. This pestilence also was an occasion which the Pagan priests used to renew the rage of persecution against them, by persuading the people that it was on account of the lenity used toward the Christians, that the gods sent down their judgments upon the nations. In the year 254, Valerian being declared emperor, restored the church to a state of tranquillity.

VI. The clemency which Valerian shewed to the Christians, continued until the fifth year of his reign. Then the scene began to change. Macrianus, a cruel bigot to paganism, had gained an entire ascendant over Valerian, and was his chief counsellor in every thing that related to the administration of the government. By his persuasion the Christians were prohibited to assemble together, and their bishops and doctors were sent into banishment. This edict was published in the year 257, and was followed, the year after, by one still more severe : in consequence of which a considerable number of Christians, in all the provinces of the empire, were put to death, and that by such cruel methods of execution, as were more terrible than death itself. Of those that suffered in this persecution, the most eminent were Cyprian, bishop of Carthage ;

thage; Sixtus, bishop of Rome; and Laurentius, a Roman deacon, who was barbarously consumed by a slow and lingering fire. An unexpected event suspended the sufferings of the Christians. Valerian was made prisoner in the war against the Persians; and his son Gallienus, in the year 260, restored peace to the church.

VII. The condition of the Christians was rather supportable than happy, under the reign of Gallienus, which lasted eight years; as also under the short administration of his successor Claudius. Nor did they suffer much during the first four years of the reign of Aurelian, who was raised to the empire in the year 270. But the fifth year of this emperor's administration would have proved fatal to them, had not his violent death prevented the execution of his cruel purposes. For while he was preparing a formidable attack upon the Christians, he was obliged to march into Gaul, where he was murdered in the year 275, before his edicts were published throughout the empire. Few therefore suffered martyrdom under his reign; and, during the remainder of this century, the Christians enjoyed ease and tranquillity. They were, at least, free from any violent attacks of oppression, except in a small number of cases, where the avarice and superstition of the Roman magistrates interrupted their tranquillity.

VIII. While the Roman emperors and proconsuls employed against the Christians the terror of unrighteous edicts, the Platonic philosophers exhausted against Christianity all the force of their learning and eloquence. These artful adversaries were so much the more dangerous, as they had adopted several of the doctrines of the gospel, and, with a specious air of impar-

tiality, were attempting to reconcile paganism with Christianity. These philosophers had at their head Porphyry, a Syrian, who wrote against the Christians a long and laborious work.

IX. Many were the stratagems by which this sect endeavoured to diminish the authority of the Christian doctrine. But none of these were more dangerous than the seducing artifice, with which they formed a comparison between the life, actions, and miracles of Christ, and the history of the ancient philosophers. With this view Archytas of Tarentum, Pythagoras, of whom Porphyry wrote the life, Apollonius Tyanæus, a Pythagorean philosopher, whose miracles were highly celebrated by the vulgar, were exhibited as divine teachers and rivals of the glory of the Son of God. Philostratus, one of the most eminent rhetoricians of this age, composed a pompous history of the life of Apollonius, who did nothing but ape the austerity and sanctity of Pythagoras. This history appears manifestly designed to draw a parallel between Christ and the philosopher of Tyana; but the impudent fictions and the ridiculous fables, with which this work is filled, must, one would think, have rendered it incapable of deceiving any who were possessed of a sound mind.

PART II.

The INTERNAL HISTORY of the CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

Concerning the state of letters and philosophy during this century.

I. **T**HE arts and sciences, which, in the preceding century, were in a declining state, seemed, in this, ready to expire. The celebrated rhetorician Longinus, and the eminent historian Dion Cassius, with a few others, were the last among the Greeks, who stood in the breach against prevailing ignorance and barbarism. Men of learning and genius were less numerous still in the western provinces of the empire. Different reasons contributed to this decay of learning. Few of the emperors patronized the sciences. Besides, the civil wars that almost always distracted the empire, were extremely unfavourable to the pursuit of science, and the perpetual incursions of the barbarous nations interrupted that leisure and tranquillity which are so essential to the progress of learning and knowledge.

II. If we turn our eyes towards the state of philosophy, the prospect will appear somewhat less desolate. There were as yet, in several of the Grecian sects, men of considerable knowledge, of whom Longinus has mentioned the greatest part. But all these sects were eclipsed by the school of Ammonius, whose doctrines have been considered above. This victorious

sect, which was formed in Egypt, issued forth from thence with such a rapid progress, that in a short time it extended itself almost throughout the Roman empire. This amazing progress was due to Plotinus, the most eminent disciple of Ammonius, a man endowed by nature with a genius capable of the most profound researches, and equal to the investigation of the most difficult subjects. This penetrating philosopher taught publicly, first in Persia, and afterwards at Rome, and in Campania; in all which places the youth flocked in crowds to receive his instruction. He comprehended the precepts of his philosophy in several books, the most of which are yet extant.

III. The number of disciples that were formed in the school of Plotinus, is almost beyond credibility. The most famous of them was Porphyry, who spread abroad through Sicily, and many other countries, the doctrine of his master, revised with great accuracy, adorned with the graces of a flowing style, and enriched with curious improvements. From the time of Ammonius, until the sixth century, this was almost the only system of philosophy that was publicly taught at Alexandria. Thence Plutarch brought it into Greece, and renewed, at Athens, the celebrated *academy*, from whence issued a set of illustrious philosophers.

IV. The famous question concerning the excellence and utility of human learning was now debated with great warmth among the Christians, and the contending parties seemed hitherto of equal force in point of numbers. Many recommended the study of philosophy, and an acquaintance with the Greek and Roman literature; while others maintained, that these were pernicious

cious to the interests of genuine Christianity. The cause of letters and philosophy triumphed, however, by degrees; and those who wished well to them, gained ground more and more. This victory was principally due to the authority of Origen, who having been early instructed in Platonism, blended it with the purer tenets of a celestial doctrine, and recommended it in the warmest manner to the youth who attended his public lessons. The fame of this philosopher increased daily among the Christians, and, in proportion to his rising credit, his method of proposing and explaining the doctrines of Christianity gained authority, till it became almost universal. Besides, some of the disciples of Plotinus having embraced Christianity, on condition that they should be allowed to retain such of the opinions of their master, as they thought of superior excellence, this must also have contributed to turn the balance in favour of the sciences. These Christian philosophers preserving still a fervent zeal for the doctrines of their heathen chief, would naturally embrace every opportunity of spreading them abroad, and insinuating them into the minds of the ignorant and the unwary.

C H A P. II.

Concerning the doctors and ministers of the church, and its form of government, during this century.

I. **T**HE form of ecclesiastical government that had been adopted by Christians in general, had now acquired greater degrees of stability. In the larger cities, there was, at the head
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of each church, a person to whom was given the title of *bishop*, who ruled this sacred community with authority, in concert with the body of *presbyters*, and consulting, in matters of moment, the opinion of the whole assembly. It is equally evident, that in every province, *one* bishop was invested with a certain superiority over the rest. This was necessary to the maintenance of that *association* of churches that had been introduced in the preceding century, and contributed, moreover, to facilitate the holding of *general councils*. It must, at the same time, be observed, that the privileges of these *primitive bishops* were not, every where, accurately fixed; nor does it appear, that the chief authority, in the province, was always conferred upon that bishop who presided over the church established in the metropolis. It is further to be noticed, that the bishops of Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria, considered as rulers of primitive and apostolic churches, had a kind of pre-eminence over all others, and were not only consulted frequently in affairs of a momentous nature, but were also distinguished by peculiar privileges.

II. With respect, particularly, to the bishop of Rome; he is supposed to have had, at this time, a certain pre-eminence in the church. But even those who attributed this pre-eminence to the Roman prelate, insisted, with the utmost warmth, upon the *equality* in point of *dignity* and *authority*, that subsisted among all of the episcopal order. In consequence of this, they rejected, with contempt, the judgment of the *bishop* of Rome, when they thought it ill-founded or unjust, and followed their own sense of things with perfect independence. Of this Cyprian gave an eminent example in his famous controversy with Stephen,

Stephen, bishop of Rome, concerning the *baptism of heretics*, in which he treated the arrogance of that imperious prelate with perfect contempt. Whoever compares these things together, will easily perceive, that the *pre-eminence* of the bishop of Rome, was a pre-eminence of *order* only, not of *power* and *authority*. The pre-eminence of the bishop of Rome, in the universal church, was such as that of Cyprian in the African churches. And every one knows that the precedence of this latter prelate diminished, in nothing, the equality of the African bishops, but gave only to Cyprian, as the president of their general assemblies, a power of calling councils, and of presiding in them.

III. The face of things began now to change in the Christian church. The ancient method of ecclesiastical government seemed, in general, still to subsist; while, at the same time, by imperceptible steps, it degenerated towards a religious monarchy. For the bishops aspired to higher power and authority than they had formerly possessed; and not only violated the rights of the people, but the privileges of the presbyters. This change, in the form of ecclesiastical government, was soon followed by vices which dishonoured the character of those, to whom the administration of the church was committed. For though several yet continued illustrious examples of Christian virtue; yet many were sunk in luxury and voluptuousness, puffed up with vanity, arrogance, and ambition, possessed with a spirit of contention and discord, and addicted to many other vices. The *bishops* assumed, in many places, a princely authority, particularly those who had the greatest number of churches, and who presided over the most opulent assemblies. They

They appropriated to their evangelical function the splendid ensigns of temporal majesty. And the example of the bishops was imitated by the *presbyters*, who, neglecting the sacred duties of their station, abandoned themselves to indolence, delicacy and luxury. And the *laity* trod in their steps; so that, even in the middle of this century, the main body of Christians went as far in all ungodliness and unrighteousness, as the Heathens themselves.

IV. From what has been now observed, we may come at the true origin of *minor*, or lesser *orders*, which were, in this century, added to those of the *bishops*, *presbyters*, and *deacons*. For, certainly, the titles and offices of *subdeacons*, *acolythi*, *ostiarii*, *readers*, *exorcists*, and *copiata*, would never have been heard of in the church, if its rulers had been zealously employed in promoting the interests of piety. But when the honours of the bishops and presbyters were augmented, the deacons also began to extend their views, and to despise those lower employments which they had hitherto exercised with such humility and zeal. The *subdeacons* were designed to ease the *deacons* of the meanest part of their work. Their office, consequently, was to prepare the sacred vessels of the altar, and to deliver them to the deacons in time of divine service, to attend the doors of the church during the communion-service, to go on the bishop's embassies, with his letters or messages to foreign churches. In a word, they were so subordinate to the superior rulers of the church, that, by a canon of the council of Laodicea, they were forbidden to sit in the presence of a *deacon* without his leave.—The order of *acolythi* was peculiar to the Latin church; for there was no such order in the Greek

Greek church during the four first centuries. Their name signifies *attendants*, and their principal office was to light the candles of the church, and to attend the ministers with wine for the eucharist. The *ostiarii*, or *door-keepers*, were appointed to open and shut the doors, as servants under the *deacons* and *subdeacons*; and to give notice of the times of prayer and church-assemblies, which, in time of persecution, required a private signal; and that probably was the first reason for instituting this order in the church of Rome, whose example, by degrees, was followed by other churches.—The *readers* were those that were appointed to read the scripture. The *exorcists* were appointed to drive out evil spirits from the bodies of persons possessed; they were not erected into an ecclesiastical order until the latter end of the third century.—The *copiata*, or *fossarii*, were to take care of funerals, and to provide for the decent interment of the dead. In vain have Baronius and other Romish writers asserted, that these inferior orders were of apostolical institution. The contrary is evidently proved, since none of these offices were known till the third century, and some of them not till the fourth. Marriage was permitted to all the various ranks and orders of the clergy, high and low. Those, however, who continued in a state of celibacy, obtained by this abstinence a higher reputation of sanctity than others.

V. Thus we have given a short view of the rulers of the church during this century, and shall now mention the principal writers. The most eminent of these was Origen, a *presbyter* and *catechist* of *Alexandria*, a man of vast and uncommon abilities. Had the justness of his judgment been equal to the immensity of his genius,

genius, the fervor of his piety, his indefatigable patience, his extensive erudition, and his other eminent talents, all encomiums must have fallen short of his merit. Yet such as he was, his virtues and his labours deserve the admiration of all ages.

The second among the writers of this century was Julius Africanus, a native of Palestine, a man of the most profound erudition, but the greatest part of whose labours are lost.

It were to be wished that we had more of the writings of Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, than those which have survived the ruins of time, since the few remaining fragments of his works discover the most consummate wisdom, and the most amiable spirit of moderation, and thus abundantly vindicate from all suspicion of flattery the ancients who mentioned him under the title of Dionysius the Great.

VI. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, a man of the most eminent abilities, stands foremost in the list of Latin writers. His letters, and indeed the most of his works, breathe such a noble and pathetic spirit of piety, that it is impossible to read them without the warmest feelings of divine enthusiasm.

The *dialogue* of Minucius Felix, which bears the title of *Octavius*, effaces with such judgment, spirit, and force the calumnies that were cast upon the Christians by their adversaries, that it deserves an attentive perusal from those who are desirous to know the state of the church during this century.

The seven Books of Arnobius, the African, written *against the Gentiles*, are a still more copious and ample defence of the Christians, and though obscure in several places, may yet be read with pleasure and with profit.

C H A P. III.

*Concerning the doctrine of the Christian church
in this century.*

I. **T**HE principal doctrines of Christianity were now explained to the people in their native purity and simplicity, without any mixture of abstract reasonings or subtil inventions. But the Christian doctors, who had applied themselves to philosophy, soon struck out into the devious wilds of fancy. The Egyptians distinguished themselves in this new method of explaining the truth. They looked upon it as a glorious task to bring the doctrines of celestial wisdom into subjection to the precepts of their philosophy. Origen was at the head of this speculative tribe. This great man, enchanted by the charms of the Platonic philosophy, set it up as the test of religion, and imagined that the reasons of each doctrine were to be found in that favourite philosophy. It must be confessed, that he handled this matter with modesty and caution; but he gave an example to his disciples, the abuse of which could not fail to be pernicious. And so the case was: for the disciples of Origen, breaking forth from the limits fixed by their master, interpreted in the most licentious manner the divine truths of religion according to the Platonic philosophy.

II. The same principles gave rise to that species of *theology*, which was called *mystic*^a. The

^a I doubt this much. I believe *mystic divinity* was not known in the world till several centuries after. I doubt likewise, whether this be a just representation of their principles.

authors of this are not known, but the principles from whence it sprung are manifest. They held that *reason* was an *emanation from God into the human soul*; that *silence, tranquillity, repose, and solitude*, accompanied with acts of mortification, were the *means* by which the *hidden and internal word* was *excited* to produce its latent virtues.

III. This method of reasoning produced strange effects, and drove many into caves and deserts, where they macerated their bodies with hunger and thirst, and submitted to the miseries of the severest discipline. And it is not improbable that Paul, the first hermit, was rather engaged by this imagination, than by persecution, to fly into the deserts of Thebais, where he led, during ninety years, a life more worthy of a savage animal, than of a rational being. But, it is to be observed, that though Paul is placed at the head of the order of Hermits, yet that unsociable manner of life was very common in Egypt, Syria, India, and Mesopotamia, not only long before his time, but even before the coming of Christ. And it is still practised among the Mahometans as well as the Christians.

IV. The disputes concerning the *baptism of heretics* now commenced, but were not carried on with candor and impartiality. The warmth and violence that were exerted in this controversy, were far from being edifying to such as were acquainted with the true genius of Christianity.

As there was no express law which determined the manner and form, according to which those who abandoned the heretical sects were to be received into the church, the rules practised in this matter were not the same in all Christian churches. Many of the Oriental and African Christians

Christians placed recanting heretics in the rank of catechumens, and admitted them, by *baptism*, into the communion of the faithful; while the greatest part of the European churches used no other forms in their reception than the *imposition of hands*, accompanied with solemn prayer. This diversity prevailed for a long time without kindling contentions or animosities. But, at length, charity waxed cold, and the fire of ecclesiastical discord broke out. In this century, the Asiatic Christians came to a determination in a point that was hitherto, in some measure, undecided; and in more than one council established it as a law, that all heretics were to be re-baptized. When Stephen, bishop of Rome, was informed of this determination, he behaved with the most unchristian violence and arrogance towards the Asiatic Christians, and excluded them from the communion of the church of Rome. These haughty proceedings made no impression upon Cyprian, who, notwithstanding the menaces of the Roman pontiff, assembled a council on this occasion, adopted, with the rest of the African bishops, the opinion of the Asiatics, and gave notice thereof to the imperious Stephen. The fury of the latter was redoubled at this, and produced many threatnings against Cyprian, who replied, with great force and resolution, and, in a second council held at Carthage, declared the baptism, administered by heretics, void of all efficacy. Upon this, the choler of Stephen swelled beyond measure, and, by a decree full of invectives, which was received with contempt, he excommunicated the African bishops, whose moderation on the one hand, and the death of their imperious antagonist

nist on the other, put an end to this violent controversy.

C H A P. IV.

Concerning the rites and ceremonies used in the church during this century.

I. **A**LL the records of this century mention the multiplication of rites and ceremonies in the Christian church. In most of the provinces there were, at this time, certain fixed places set apart for public worship. Nor is it improbable, that these churches were, in several places, embellished with images and other ornaments.

With respect to the form of divine worship, and the times appointed for its celebration, there was little innovation in this century. Two things, however, deserve to be taken notice of; the first, that the discourses, addressed to the people, were very different from those of the earlier times of the church, and degenerated much from the ancient simplicity. The second, that, about this time, the use of *incense* was introduced, at least, into many churches.

II. Several alterations were now introduced, in the celebration of the Lord's supper. The prayers, used upon this occasion, were lengthened; the solemnity and pomp, considerably increased. And gold and silver vessels were now used in the administration of it. As to the time of celebrating, there was a considerable variation in different churches, arising from their different circumstances. In some, it was celebrated in the morning; in others, at noon; and in others, in the evening. The sacred feasts, that accompanied

panied it, preceded its celebration in some churches, and followed it in others.

III. There were, twice a year, stated times, when baptism was administered, after a long course of trial. This ceremony was performed only in the presence of such as were already initiated into the Christian mysteries. The remission of sins was thought to be its immediate fruit; while the bishop, by prayer and the imposition of hands, was supposed to confer the sanctifying gifts of the Holy Ghost. We have already mentioned the principal rites used in baptism; and we have only to add, that none were admitted to it, until, by the formidable shouts of the *exorcist*, they had been delivered from the dominion of the prince of darkness^b. After the administration, the candidates returned home, adorned with crowns and arrayed in white garments, as sacred emblems; the former, of their victory over sin and the world; the latter, of their inward purity and innocence.

IV. The Christians offered up their ordinary prayers at three stated times of the day, *viz.* At the *third*, the *sixth*, and the *ninth hour*, according to the custom observed among the Jews. But, besides these stated devotions, true believers were assiduous in their addresses to the Supreme Being, and poured forth frequently their vows and supplications before his throne,

^b It is evident, that *exorcism* was not added to the other baptismal rites till the third century. For, before this time, we hear no mention made of it. Justin Martyr, in his *second apology*, and Tertullian in his book concerning the *military crown*, give us an account of the ceremonies used in baptism during the second century, without any mention of *exorcism*. This is a very strong argument of its being posterior to these two great men; and that it made its entrance into the Christian church in the third century.

because they considered prayer as the most essential duty, as well as the noblest employment of a sanctified nature. At those festivals, which recalled the memory of some joyful event, and were to be celebrated with expressions of thanksgiving, they prayed standing, as they thought that posture the fittest to express their joy and their confidence. Certain forms of prayer were, undoubtedly, used in many places both in public and in private; but many also expressed their pious feelings in the natural effusions of an unpremeditated eloquence.

C H A P. V.

Concerning the divisions and heresies that troubled the church during this century.

I. **T**HE same sects, that in the former ages had produced such disorder in the Christian church, continued in this. The Montanists, Valentinians, Marcionites, and the other Gnostics, continued still to draw out their forces; and their *obstinacy* remained even when their *strength* was gone. And while the Christians were struggling with these corrupters of the truth, a new enemy started up suddenly. This was Manes (or Manichæus) by birth a Persian; educated among the Magi, and himself one of that number before he embraced Christianity. Instructed in all those arts and sciences, which the Persians held in the highest esteem, he had penetrated into the depths of astronomy in the midst of a rural life; studied the art of healing, and applied himself to painting and philosophy. His genius was vigorous and sublime, but redundant.

dundant and ungoverned. He was so adventurous as to attempt a coalition of the doctrine of the Magi with the Christian system: and, in order to succeed in this audacious enterprize, he affirmed that Christ had left the doctrine of salvation unfinished; and that he was the *comforter*, whom the Saviour had promised to his disciples to lead them to all truth. Many were deceived by his eloquence, by the gravity of his countenance, and the innocence and simplicity of his manners; so that, in a short time, he formed a sect not inconsiderable. - He was put to death by Varanes I. king of the Persians; though historians are not agreed concerning the time.

II. The doctrine of Manes was a motley mixture of Christianity, with the ancient philosophy of the Persians. He combined these two systems, and accommodated to Jesus Christ the characters and actions which the Persians attributed to the god Mithras. The principal doctrines of Manes are comprehended in the following summary:

“ There are two principles from which all things proceed: the one is a most *pure and subtil matter*, called *Light*; and the other a *gross and corrupt substance*, called *Darkness*. Both of these are subject to a superintending Being, whose existence is from all eternity. The Being who presides over the Light, is called God; he that rules the *land of Darkness*, bears the title of Demon. The Ruler of the Light is supremely happy, and, in consequence thereof, benevolent and good: the Prince of Darkness is unhappy in himself, and desiring to render others so, is evil and malignant. These two Beings have produced an immense multitude of creatures, resembling themselves, and distributed them through their respective provinces.

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III. "The Prince of Darkness knew not, for a long series of ages, that Light existed in the universe; and no sooner perceived it, than he bent his endeavours towards the subjecting it to his empire. The Ruler of the Light opposed to his efforts an army commanded by the *first man*, but not with success; for the Prince of Darkness seized upon a considerable portion of the celestial elements, and of the Light itself, and mingled them in the mass of corrupt matter. The second General of the Ruler of the Light, whose name was the *living spirit*, made war with more success against the Prince of Darkness, but could not entirely disengage the pure particles of the celestial matter from the corrupt mass. The Prince of Darkness, after his defeat, produced the first parents of the human race. The beings engendered from this original stock, consist of a body formed out of the corrupt matter of the kingdom of Darkness, and of two souls, one of which is *sensitive and lustful*, and owes its existence to the *evil principle*; the other *rational and immortal*, a particle of that divine Light, which was carried away by the army of Darkness, and immersed into the mass of malignant matter.

IV. "Mankind being thus formed by the Prince of Darkness, and those minds, that were the productions of the eternal Light, being united to their mortal bodies, God created the earth out of the corrupt mass of matter, by that *living spirit*, who had vanquished the Prince of Darkness. The design of this creation was to furnish a dwelling for the human race, to deliver, by degrees, the captive souls from their corporeal prisons, and to extract the celestial elements from the gross substance. In order to
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carry this design into execution, God produced *two beings* of eminent dignity from his own substance, which were to lend their auspicious succours to imprisoned souls; one of these sublime entities was Christ; and the other the Holy Ghost. Christ is that glorious intelligence, which the Persians called *Mithras*: he is a most splendid substance, consisting of the brightness of the eternal Light: endowed with life; enriched with infinite wisdom; and his residence is in the sun. The Holy Ghost is also a luminous and animated body, diffused throughout every part of the atmosphere, which surrounds this terrestrial globe. This *genial principle* illuminates the minds of men, renders the earth fruitful, and draws forth gradually from its bosom the latent particles of celestial fire, which it wafts up to their primitive station.

V. "After the Supreme Being had, for a long time, exhorted the captive souls, by the ministry of the angels and of holy men raised up for that purpose, he ordered Christ to leave the solar regions, and to descend upon earth, in order to accelerate the return of those imprisoned spirits to their celestial country. Christ appeared among the Jews, clothed with the shadowy form of a human body, and not with the real substance. During his ministry, he taught mortals how to disengage the rational soul from the corrupt body, to conquer the violence of malignant matter, and demonstrated his mission by miracles. On the other hand, the Prince of Darkness used every method to enslave the Jews against this divine messenger, and incited them, at length, to put him to death upon an ignominious cross; which punishment, however, he suffered not in reality, but only in appearance.

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When Christ had fulfilled the purposes of his mission, he returned to his throne in the sun, and appointed a certain number of chosen apostles to propagate through the world the religion he had taught. But, before his departure, he promised that at a certain time he would send an apostle superior to all others, whom he called the *paraclete*, or *comforter*, who should add many things to the precepts he had delivered. This *comforter* is Manes, the Persian, who, by the order of the Most High, declared to mortals the whole doctrine of salvation.

VI. "Those souls, who believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, renounce the worship of the God of the Jews, who is the Prince of Darkness, obey the laws delivered by Christ, as they are enlarged and illustrated by the *comforter*, *Manes*, and combat, with persevering fortitude, the lusts and appetites of a corrupt nature, derive from this faith and obedience the advantage of being gradually purified. The total purification of souls cannot, indeed, be accomplished during this life. Hence it is, that the souls of men, after death, must pass through two states more of probation, by *water* and *fire*, before they can ascend to the regions of Light. They mount, therefore, first into the moon, which consists of benign and salutary *water*; from whence, after a lustration of fifteen days, they proceed to the sun, whose purifying *fire* removes entirely all their corruption. The bodies composed of malignant matter, which they have left behind them, enter into their original mass.

VII. "On the other hand, those souls who have neglected their purification, pass, after death, into the bodies of animals, until they have

have expiated their guilt and accomplished their probation. Some, on account of their peculiar obstinacy pass through a severer course of trial, being delivered over, for a certain time, to the power of malignant, aerial spirits, who torment them in various ways. When the greatest part of the captive souls are restored to the regions of light, then a devouring fire shall break forth, at the divine command, from the caverns in which it is at present confined, and consume the world. After this event, the Prince and *powers of darkness* shall be forced to return to their primitive seats of anguish and misery, in which they shall dwell for ever."

VIII. About the middle of this century arose Sabellius, an African bishop, or presbyter, who, in Pentapolis, a province of Cyrenaica, and in Ptolémaïs, or Barce, its principal city, explained, in a peculiar manner, the doctrine of scripture concerning the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. He maintained that a certain *energy* only, proceeding from the supreme Parent, or a certain portion of the divine nature, was united to the Son of God, the man Jesus; and he considered, in the same manner, the *Holy Ghost*, as a portion of the everlasting Father.

IX. Paul of Samosata, bishop of Antioch, and also a magistrate or civil judge, was a vain and arrogant man, whom riches had rendered insolent. He introduced much confusion into the eastern churches, by his new explication of the doctrine of the gospel concerning the nature of God and Christ, and left behind him a sect, that assumed the title of Paulians, or Paulianists. As far as we can judge of his doctrine, it seems to have amounted to this: "That the *Son* and the *Holy Ghost* exist in God in the same manner, as the

the faculties of *reason* and *activity* do in man: that Christ was born a mere man; but that the *wisdom* of the Father descended into him, and by him wrought miracles upon earth, and instructed the nations: and finally, that, on account of this union of the *divine word* with the *man* Jesus, Christ might, though improperly, be called *God*."

X. Among the sects that arose in this century, we place that of the Novatians the last. This sect cannot be charged with having corrupted Christianity; but by the unreasonable severity of their discipline, they gave occasion to the most deplorable divisions. Novatian, a presbyter of the church of Rome, a man of uncommon learning and eloquence, but of an austere character, entertained the most unfavourable sentiments of those who had been separated from the church. He denied that such as had fallen into grievous transgressions, especially those who had apostatized from the faith, were ever to be again received into the bosom of the church. The greatest part of the presbyters were of a different opinion, especially Cornelius, whose credit and influence were raised to the highest pitch by his eminent virtues. Hence, when a bishop was to be chosen, in the year 250, to succeed Fabianus in the see of Rome, Novatian opposed the election of Cornelius, with the greatest activity and bitterness. His opposition, however, was in vain, for Cornelius was chosen. Novatian, upon this, separated himself from the jurisdiction of Cornelius, who, in his turn, called a council at Rome in the year 251, and cut off Novatian and his partisans from the church. Being thus excommunicated, he erected a new society, of which he was the first bishop; and which

which, on account of the severity of its discipline, was followed by many, and flourished, until the fifth century, in the greatest part of those provinces which had received the gospel. The chief person who assisted Novatian, in this enterprise, was Novatus, a Carthaginian presbyter, who, during the heat of this controversy, had come from Carthage to Rome, to escape the excommunication of Cyprian.

XI. There was no difference, in point of doctrine, between the Novatians and other Christians. What distinguished them was, their refusing to re-admit to the communion of the church those who, after baptism, had fallen into heinous crimes, though they did not pretend, that even such were excluded from all possibility of salvation. They considered the Christian church as a society where virtue reigned universally; and, of consequence, they looked upon every society, which re-admitted heinous offenders, as unworthy the title of a Christian church. It was from hence also, that they assumed the title of *Cathari*, i. e. the *pure*; and they obliged such as came over to them from the general body of Christians, to submit to be baptized a second time, as a necessary preparation for entering into their society.

I have sometimes doubted, whether both Novatian and his doctrine have not been greatly misrepresented: whether he was not himself, one of the holiest men who lived in that century: and whether he taught any more, than that *impenitent* sinners ought not to be retained in, or admitted into the church.

B O O K II.

Containing the STATE of the CHRISTIAN
CHURCH from the time of CONSTANTINE
the GREAT to CHARLEMAGNE.

The F O U R T H C E N T U R Y.

P A R T I.

The EXTERNAL HISTORY of the CHURCH.

C H A P T E R I.

*Concerning the prosperous and calamitous events
which happened to the church during this century.*

I. **I**N the beginning of this century, the Roman empire was under the dominion of four chiefs, of whom two, Diocletian and Maximian Hercules, were of superior dignity, and were distinguished each by the title of Augustus; while the other two, viz. Constantius Chlorus and Maximinus Galerius, were in subordination to the former, and bore the appellation of Cæsars. Under these four emperors, the church enjoyed an agreeable calm. Diocletian, though much addicted to superstition, did not entertain any aversion to the Christians: and Constantius Chlorus, who had abandoned the absurdities of polytheism, treated them with benevolence. This alarmed the Pagan priests, who apprehended, not without reason, that the Christian religion

religion would become universal. Under these fears of the downfall of their authority, they addressed themselves to Diocletian, whom they knew to be of a timorous and credulous disposition, and, by fictitious oracles and other such perfidious stratagems, engaged him to persecute the Christians.

II. Diocletian, however, stood, for some time, unmoved by the arts of a superstitious priesthood, who then addressed themselves to Maximinus Galerius, son-in-law to Diocletian. This prince, whose gross ignorance of every thing but military affairs was accompanied with a fierce and savage temper, was a proper instrument for executing their designs. He solicited Diocletian with such indefatigable importunity for an edict against the Christians, that he, at length, obtained his purpose. For in the year 303, when this emperor was at Nicomedia, an order was obtained from him to pull down the churches of the Christians, to burn all their books and writings, and to take from them all their civil rights and privileges. The first edict extended not to the lives of the Christians, for Diocletian was extremely averse to blood-shed; it was, however, destructive to many of them, particularly to those who refused to deliver the sacred books. Many Christians therefore, and among them several bishops and presbyters, seeing the consequences of this refusal, delivered up all the religious books that were in their possession, to save their lives. This conduct was highly condemned by resolute Christians, who looked upon this compliance as sacrilegious, and branded those who were guilty of it with the appellation of *traitors*.

III. Not long after the publication of this first edict, a fire broke out, at two different times, in the palace of Nicomedia, where Galerius lodged with Diocletian. The Christians were accused as the authors of this; and the credulous Diocletian caused vast numbers of them to suffer, at Nicomedia, the punishment of incendiaries, and to be tormented in the most inhuman manner. About the same time there arose certain tumults in Armenia and in Syria, which were also attributed to the Christians, and dexterously made use of to arm against them the emperor's fury. And accordingly Diocletian, by a new edict, ordered all the bishops and ministers of the Christian church to be cast into prison. Nor did his violence end here; for a third edict was soon issued out, by which it was ordered, that all sorts of torments should be employed, to force these venerable captives to renounce their profession; for it was hoped, that, if the bishops and doctors of the church could be brought to yield, their flocks would be easily induced to follow their example. An immense number of persons, distinguished by their piety and learning, became victims throughout the Roman empire, Gaul excepted, which was under the mild and equitable dominion of Constantius Chlorus. Some were punished in such a shameful manner, as the rules of decency oblige us to pass in silence; some were put to death after having had their constancy tried by inexpressible tortures; and some were sent to the mines to draw out the remains of a miserable life.

IV. In the second year of this horrible persecution, the 304th of the Christian æra, a fourth edict was published by Diocletian. By it the magistrates were ordered to force all
Christians,

Christians, without distinction of rank or sex, to sacrifice to the gods, and to employ all sorts of torments in order to drive them to it. The diligence and zeal of the Roman magistrates, in the execution of this edict, had like to have proved fatal to the Christian cause.

Galerius now made no longer a mystery of the project he had been revolving in his mind. Finding his scheme ripe for execution, he obliged Diocletian and Maximian Hercules to resign their dignity, and declared himself emperor of the east; leaving in the west Constantius Chlorus, with the ill state of whose health he was well acquainted. He chose colleagues according to his own fancy, and rejecting the proposal of Diocletian, who recommended Maxentius, and Constantine the son of Constantius; his choice fell upon Severus, and Daza his sister's son, to whom he had, a little before, given the name of Maximin. This revolution restored peace to those Christians, who lived in the western provinces, under the administration of Constantius; while those of the east, under the tyranny of Galerius, had their calamities dreadfully augmented.

V. The divine providence, however, was preparing more happy days for the church. In order to this, it confounded the schemes of Galerius. In the year 306, Constantius Chlorus dying in Britain, the army saluted with the title of Augustus, his son Constantine, surnamed afterwards the Great. Galerius was obliged to bear this with patience, and even to confirm it with the outward marks of his approbation. Soon after, a civil war broke out, the occasion of which was as follows: Maximin Galerius, enraged at the election of Constantine, gave him only the title of Cæsar, and created Severus emperor.

Maxentius, the son of Maximian Hercules, and son-in-law to Galerius, provoked at the preference given to Severus, assumed the imperial dignity, and found the less difficulty in making good this usurpation, because the Roman people hoped, by his means, to deliver themselves from the insupportable tyranny of Galerius. Having caused himself to be proclaimed emperor, he chose his father Maximian for his colleague, who was acknowledged by the senate and the people. Amidst all these troubles, Constantine, beyond all human expectation, made his way to the throne.

The western Christians, those of Italy and Africa excepted, enjoyed tranquillity during these civil tumults. Those of the east seldom continued for any considerable time in the same situation; subject to various changes; their condition was sometimes adverse and sometimes tolerably easy, according to the fluctuating state of public affairs. At length, however, Maximin Galerius, who had been the author of their heaviest calamities, being brought to the brink of the grave by a most dreadful disease, whose complicated horrors no language can express, published in the year 311, a solemn edict, ordering the persecution to cease, and restoring freedom to the Christians.

VI. After the death of Galerius, his dominions fell into the hands of Maximin and Licinius, who divided between them the provinces he had possessed. At the same time, Maxentius, who had usurped the government of Africa and Italy, determined to make war upon Constantine, who was now master of Spain and the Gauls, with the view of reducing, under his dominion, the whole western empire. Constantine marched with a part of his army into Italy, gave battle

to Maxentius at a small distance from Rome, and defeated totally that tyrant, who, in his precipitate flight, fell into the Tiber, and was drowned. After this victory, which happened in the year 312, Constantine, and his colleague Lucinius, immediately granted to the Christians a full power of living according to their own institutions; which power was specified still more clearly in another edict drawn up at Milan, in the following year. Maximin indeed, who ruled in the east, was preparing new calamities for the Christians, and threatening also with destruction the western emperors. But his projects were disconcerted by the victory which Licinius gained over his army, and, through despair, he ended his life by poison in the year 313.

VII. About the same time Constantine the Great, who had hitherto discovered no religious principles of any kind, embraced Christianity, in consequence, as it is said, of a *miraculous cross*, which appeared to him in the air, as he was marching towards Rome to attack Maxentius. But this is very doubtful. Indeed the edict of Constantine, in favour of the Christians, and many other circumstances shew, that he was well disposed to them and to their worship; but are no proof that he looked upon Christianity as true; which would have been the natural effect of a miraculous conversion. It appears evident, on the contrary, that this emperor considered the religion, which was handed down from the ancient Romans, as true and useful to mankind; and declared it as his intention and desire, that both should be exercised and professed in the empire, leaving to each individual the liberty of adhering to that which he thought the best. Constantine, it is true, did not remain always in
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this state of indifference. In process of time, he arrived at an entire persuasion, that Christianity was of divine origin. He was convinced of the falshood of all other religious institutions; and in consequence, exhorted all his subjects to embrace the gospel; and, at length, employed all his authority in the abolition of the ancient superstition. It is not indeed possible, to fix precisely the time, when the sentiments of Constantine were so changed. But this change was first published to the world by the edict which this emperor issued out in the year 324, when, after the defeat and death of Licinius, he reigned sole lord of the Roman empire. His designs, however, with respect to the abolition of the ancient religion, were only made known towards the latter end of his life, by his edicts for destroying the heathen temples and prohibiting sacrifices. The sincerity of his zeal for Christianity cannot be doubted; yet his actions were not such as the Christian religion demands. And he was not baptized until a few days before his death, when that sacred rite was administered to him at Nicomedia, by Eusebius, bishop of that place.

And as it is extremely doubtful, whether Constantine ever was a Christian or not, so it is no less doubtful, whether his professing himself such, was of any real service to Christianity. It cannot be denied, that he added much riches, and honour, and dignity to the Christian Profession. But was this of any service to real Christianity? To the religion of the heart? Rather it sapped the very foundation of it, and jumbled together nominal Christianity and real Heathenism.

VIII. The doubts concerning the *miraculous cross* that Constantine solemnly declared he had seen in the air, are many and considerable. It

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is easy, indeed, to refute the opinion of those, who look upon this prodigy as a fiction invented by the emperor to animate his troops, or who consider the narration as wholly fabulous. The sentiment also of those, who imagine that this cross was no more than a natural phenomenon, is more ingenious than solid. Yet is it not certain, that the divine power interposed to confirm the wavering faith of Constantine. Most probably it was presented to the emperor in a dream, with the remarkable inscription, *hac vince*, i. e. *in this conquer*.

IX. The joy of the Christians on account of the favourable edicts of Constantine and Licinius, was soon interrupted by the war between these two princes. Licinius, being defeated in a pitched battle in the year 314, made a treaty of peace with Constantine, and observed it during the space of nine years. But his natural violence armed him against Constantine, in the year 324, the second time. During this war, he endeavoured to engage in his cause all those who remained attached to the ancient superstition; and in order to this, persecuted the Christians in a cruel manner, and put to death many of their bishops, after trying them with torments of the most barbarous nature. But all his enterprises proved abortive; for, after several battles fought without success, he was reduced to the necessity of throwing himself at the victor's feet, and imploring his clemency; which, however, he did not long enjoy, for he was strangled, by the orders of Constantine, in the year 325. After the defeat of Licinius, the empire was ruled by Constantine alone, and the Christian cause experienced, in its happy progress, the effects of his auspicious administration.

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This zealous prince employed all the authority of his laws, and all his munificence and liberality, to efface, by degrees, the superstitions of paganism, and to propagate Christianity. He had learned, from the disturbances continually excited by Lucinius, that neither himself nor the empire could enjoy fixed tranquillity as long as the ancient superstitions subsisted; and therefore, from this period, he openly opposed the rites of paganism, as a religion detrimental to the interests of the state.

X. After the death of Constantine, which happened in the year 337, his three sons Constantine II. Constantius, and Constans, were, in consequence of his appointment, put in possession of the empire, and were all saluted as emperors by the Roman senate. The dominions allotted to Constantine were Britain, Gaul, and Spain; but he did not possess them long; for having made himself master, by force, of several places belonging to Constans, this occasioned a war between the two brothers, in the year 340, in which Constantine lost his life. Constans, who had received, at first, for his portion, Illyricum, Italy, and Africa, now became sole master of all the western provinces. He remained in possession of this vast territory until the year 350, when he was cruelly assassinated by the orders of Magnentius, one of his commanders, who revolted and declared himself emperor. But Magnentius, transported with rage and despair at his ill success in the war against Constantius, and apprehending the most terrible death from the resentment of the conqueror, laid violent hands upon himself. Thus Constantius, who before possessed the provinces of Asia, Syria, and Egypt, became in the year 353, sole

sole lord of the Roman empire, which he ruled until the year 361, when he died at Mopsucrene, on the borders of Cilicia. None of these three brothers possessed the spirit and genius of their father. They all, indeed, followed his example, in continuing to efface the ancient superstitions of the Romans, and to accelerate the progress of the Christian religion. This zeal was, no doubt, laudable; but, in the means used to accomplish it, there were many things worthy of blame.

XI. This flourishing progress of the Christian religion was interrupted, and the church reduced to the brink of destruction, when Julian, the son of Julius Constantius, was placed on the throne. This active prince, after having been declared emperor by the army, in the year 380, in consequence of his exploits among the Gauls, was, upon the death of Constantius the year following, confirmed in the undivided possession of the empire. No event could be less favourable to the Christians. For though he had been educated in the principles of Christianity, yet as he had apostatized, he employed all his efforts to restore the expiring superstition to its credit and lustre. This apostasy of Julian was owing, partly, to his aversion to the Constantine family, who had embued their hands in the blood of his father, brother, and kinsmen; and partly, to the artifices of the Platonic philosophers, who flattered his ambition by fictitious miracles and pompous predictions. It is true, he seemed averse to the use of violence in suppressing the truth; nay, he carried the appearances of moderation so far, as to allow his subjects a full power of judging for themselves, and of worshipping the deity in the manner they thought the

the most rational. But, under this mask of moderation, he attacked Christianity with the utmost bitterness, and, at the same time, with the most consummate dexterity. By art and stratagem he undermined the church, removing the privileges that were granted to Christians; shutting up the schools, in which they taught philosophy and the liberal arts; composing books against the Christians, and using a variety of other means to bring the religion of Jesus to contempt. Julian extended his views yet further, and was meditating projects of a still more formidable nature against the Christian church, which, no doubt, he would have executed, if he had returned victorious from the Persian war, which he entered into immediately after his accession to the empire. But in this war, which was rashly undertaken and imprudently conducted, he fell by the lance of a Persian soldier, and expired in the 32d year of his age, having reigned, after the death of Constantius, twenty months.

XII. It is to me just matter of surprise to find Julian placed, by many learned writers, among the greatest heroes; nay, exalted above all the princes and legislators, that have been distinguished by the wisdom of their government. Such writers must either be blinded by prejudice, or, they must never have perused those works of Julian that are still extant. The real character of Julian has few lines of that uncommon merit that has been attributed to it; for, if we set aside his genius, of which his works give no very high idea; if we except, moreover, his military courage, and his acquaintance with that vain and fanatical philosophy, which was known by the name of modern platonism, we shall find nothing remaining that is, in any measure,

measure, productive of esteem. Besides, the qualities now mentioned were, in him, counterbalanced by the most opprobrious defects. He was a slave to superstition, than which nothing is a more evident mark of a mean and abject spirit. His thirst of popular applause was excessive even to puerility; his credulity and levity surpass the powers of description: a low cunning and a profound dissimulation had acquired, in his mind, the force of predominant habits; and all this was accompanied with a total ignorance of true philosophy. So that, though, in some things, Julian may be allowed to have excelled the sons of Constantine the Great, yet it must be granted that he was, in many respects, inferior to Constantine himself, whom, upon all occasions, he treats with the utmost disdain.

XIII. As Julian affected to appear moderate in religious matters, unwilling to trouble any on account of their faith, so to the Jews, in particular, he extended so far his indulgence, as to permit them to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem. The Jews set about this important work; from which, however, they were obliged to desist, before they had even begun to lay the foundations of the sacred edifice. For, while they were removing the rubbish, formidable balls of fire, issuing out of the ground with a dreadful noise, dispersed both the works and the workmen, and repeated earthquakes filled the spectators with terror and dismay. This signal event is attested in a manner that renders its evidence irresistible. The causes of this may furnish matter of dispute. But all who consider the matter with attention, will perceive the strongest reasons for embracing the opinion of those who attribute this event to the almighty interposition of the Supreme Being.

XIV. Upon the death of Julian, Jovian succeeded in the imperial dignity. After a reign of seven months, Jovian died in the year 364, and, therefore, had not time to execute any thing of importance. The emperors who succeeded him, were Valentinian I. Valens, Gratian, Valentinian II. and Honorius; who professed Christianity, promoted its progress, and endeavoured to root out Gentile superstitions. In this they were all surpassed by the last of the emperors, who reigned in this century, *viz.* Theodosius the Great, who came to the empire in the year 379, and died in the year 395. As long as this prince lived, he exerted himself, in the most vigorous manner, in the extirpation of the Pagan superstitions, and enacted severe laws and penalties against such as adhered to them. His sons Arcadius and Honorius pursued with zeal the same end; so that, towards the conclusion of this century, the Gentile religions declined apace, and had no prospect of recovering their primitive authority.

XV. But notwithstanding all this zeal of the Christian emperors, there remained in several places, and especially in the remoter provinces, temples and religious rites consecrated to the service of the Pagan deities. And, indeed, when we look attentively into the matter, we shall find that the execution of those laws, that were enacted against the worshippers of the gods, was rather levelled at the multitude, than at persons of distinction. For it appears, that, both during the reign, and after the death of Theodosius, many of the most important posts were filled by persons, whose aversion to Christianity, and whose attachment to paganism, were sufficiently known. The example of Libanius alone is an evident

evident proof of this; since, notwithstanding his open enmity to the Christians, he was raised by Theodosius himself to the high dignity of prefect, or chief, of the Pretorian guards.

XVI. The peculiar regard shewn to the philosophers and rhetoricians, will, no doubt, appear surprising when it is considered, that all the force of their genius and all their art were employed against Christianity; and that those very sages, whose schools were reputed of such utility, were the very persons who opposed the truth with the greatest vehemence. Hierocles, the great ornament of the Platonic school, wrote, in the beginning of this century, two books against the Christians, in which he went so far as to draw a parallel between Jesus Christ and Apollonius Tyanæus. Lactantius takes notice of another philosopher, who composed three books to detect the pretended errors of the Christians. After the time of Constantine the Great, besides the long and laborious work which Julian wrote against the followers of Christ, Himerius and Libanius, in their public harangues, and Eunapius, in his lives of the philosophers, exhausted all their rage and bitterness in their efforts to defame the Christian religion.

XVII. The zeal and diligence with which Constantine and his successors exerted themselves in the cause of Christianity, prevent our surprise at the number of barbarous nations, which received the gospel. It appears probable, that both the Greater and the Lesser Armenia were enlightened with the truth not long after the rise of Christianity. The Armenian church was not, however, completely formed before this century; in the commencement of which,

Gregory converted to Christianity Tiridates, king of Armenia, and all the nobles of his court. In consequence of this, Gregory was consecrated bishop of the Armenians by Leontius, bishop of Cappadocia, and his ministry was crowned with such success, that the whole province was soon converted to the Christian faith.

XVIII. Towards the middle of this century, a certain person, named Frumentius, came from Egypt to Abassia, or Æthiopia. He made known among this people the gospel of Christ, and administered the sacrament of baptism to their king, and to several persons of the first distinction. As Frumentius was returning from hence into Egypt, he received consecration, as the first bishop of the Ethiopians, from Athanasius. And this is the reason why the Ethiopian church has, even to our times, been considered as the daughter of the Alexandrian.

The light of the gospel was introduced into Iberia, a province of Asia, now called Georgia, in the following manner: a certain woman was carried into that country as a captive, during the reign of Constantine the Great, and by the grandeur of her miracles, and the remarkable sanctity of her life, made such an impression upon the king and queen, that they abandoned their false gods, embraced the faith of the gospel, and sent to Constantinople for proper persons to give them and their people a more complete knowledge of the Christian religion.

XIX. A considerable part of the Goths, who inhabited Thrace, Mœsia, and Dacia, had embraced the doctrines of Christianity before this century; and Theophilus, their bishop, was present at the council of Nice. Constantine the Great, after having vanquished them and the Sarmatians,

Sarmatians, engaged great numbers of them to become Christians. But still a large body continued in their superstition, until the time of the emperor Valens. This prince permitted them to pass the Danube, and to inhabit Dacia, Mœsia, and Thrace; but it was on condition, that they should live in subjection to the Roman laws, and embrace the profession of Christianity. Ulphilas, bishop of those Goths, who dwelt in Mœsia, lived in this century, and distinguished himself much by his genius and piety. Among other eminent services which he rendered to his country, he invented a set of letters for their use, and translated the scriptures into the Gothic language.

XX. There remained still, in the European provinces, an incredible number of persons who adhered to the worship of the gods; and though the Christian bishops continued their efforts to gain them over, yet the work of conversion went on but slowly. In Gaul, the venerable Martin, bishop of Tours, set about this important work with tolerable success. For, in his various voyages among the Gauls, he converted many every where by the energy of his discourses and by the power of his miracles, if we may rely upon the testimony of Sulpitius Severus. He destroyed also the temples of the gods, pulled down their statues, and on all these accounts merited the title of Apostle of the Gauls.

XXI. There is no doubt, but that the victories of Constantine the Great, the fear of punishment, and the desire of pleasing this mighty conqueror and his successors, were the weighty arguments that moved whole nations, to embrace Christianity. None however, that have any acquaintance with this period of time, will attribute the whole

progress of Christianity to these causes. For it is manifest, that the indefatigable zeal of the bishops and other pious men, the sanctity which shone forth in the lives of many Christians, with the translations that were published of the sacred writings, made as strong impressions upon some, as worldly views did upon others.

XXII. The Christians, who lived under the Roman government, were not afflicted with any severe calamities from the time of Constantine the Great, except those which they suffered during the commotions raised by Licinius, and under the transitory reign of Julian. Their tranquillity however was, at different times, disturbed in several places. Among others, Athanaric, king of the Goths, persecuted, for some time, that part of the Gothic nation which had embraced Christianity. In the remoter provinces, the Pagans often massacred the Christians, who, in the propagation of their religion, were not always sufficiently attentive, either to the rules of prudence, or the dictates of humanity. The Christians, who lived beyond the limits of the Roman empire, had a harder fate. Sapor II, king of Persia, vented his rage against those of his dominions in three dreadful persecutions. The first of these happened in the 18th year of the reign of that prince, the second in the 30th, and the third in the 31st of the same reign. This last was the most cruel and destructive of the three: it carried off an incredible number of Christians, and continued during the space of forty years, having commenced in the year 330, and ceased only in 370.

P A R T II.

The INTERNAL HISTORY of the CHURCH.

C H A P T E R I.

Which contains the history of learning and philosophy.

I. **P**HILOLOGY, eloquence, poetry, and history were the branches of science particularly cultivated, at this time, by those, among the Greeks and Latins, who were desirous to make a figure in the learned world. But though several persons of both nations acquired reputation herein, yet they came all far short of the summit of fame. The best poets of this period, such as Ausonius, appear harsh, and inelegant, when compared with those of the Augustan age. The rhetoricians, departing from the noble simplicity of the ancients, instructed the youth in the art of pompous declamation; and the greatest part of the historical writers were more set upon embellishing their narrations with vain and tawdry ornaments, than upon rendering them interesting by their order, perspicuity, and truth.

II. Almost all the philosophers of this age were Modern Platonics. It is not therefore surprising, that we find the principles of platonism in all the writings of the Christians. Jamblichus of Chalcis explained, in Syria, the philosophy of Plato, or rather propagated his own opinions under that name. He was an obscure and credulous man, and his turn of mind was highly superstitious and chimerical.

III. As

III. As the emperor Julian was passionately attached to this sect, he employed every method to increase its authority. But after his death, a dreadful storm of persecution arose, under the reign of Valentinian, against the Platonists; many of whom, being accused of heinous crimes, were capitally convicted. During these commotions, Maximus, the master and favourite of Julian, by whose persuasions he had been engaged to renounce Christianity, and to apply himself to the study of magic, was put to death with several others.

IV. From the time of Constantine the Great, the Christians applied themselves with more diligence to philosophy and the liberal arts, than they had formerly done. The emperors encouraged this taste for the sciences, and left no means unemployed to excite it. For this purpose, schools were established in many cities: libraries were also erected, and men of learning were nobly recompensed. As there was reason to apprehend that the truth might suffer, if the Christian youth, for want of proper masters of their own religion, should have recourse, for their education, to the schools of the Pagan philosophers and rhetoricians.

V. Not that an acquaintance with the sciences was become universal in the church of Christ. For, as yet, there was no law enacted, which excluded the illiterate from ecclesiastical preferments and offices, and it is certain, that the greatest part, both of the bishops and presbyters, were entirely destitute of learning. Besides, that party, who looked upon all sorts of erudition, particularly that of a philosophical kind, as pernicious to true piety and religion, increased both in number and authority.

C H A P. II.

Concerning the government of the church, and the Christian doctors, during this century.

I. **C**ONSTANTINE the Great made no essential alterations in the form of church-government. Only he assumed to himself the supreme power over this sacred body, and the right of modelling and governing it in such a manner, as should be most conducive to the public good. This right he enjoyed without any opposition, as none of the bishops presumed to call his authority in question. The people therefore continued, as usual, to chuse freely their bishops and their teachers. The bishop governed the church and managed the ecclesiastical affairs of the city or district, where he presided, in council with the presbyters, and with a due regard to the suffrages of the whole assembly of the people. The provincial bishops, assembled in council, deliberated together concerning those matters that related to the interests of the churches of a whole province, as also concerning religious controversies, and the forms and rites of divine service. To these lesser councils, which were composed of the ecclesiastical deputies of one or more provinces, were afterwards added *acumenical councils*, consisting of commissioners from all churches in the Christian world, and which, consequently, represented the church universal. These were established by the authority of the emperor, who assembled the first of these at Nice. This prince thought it equitable, that questions which concerned the interests of Christianity in general, should be decided in assemblies that represented the whole body
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of the Christian church. There were never, indeed, any councils held, which could, with strict propriety, be called *universal*; those however, whose decrees were approved by the greatest part of the church, are commonly called *æcumenical* or *general* councils.

II. The rights and privileges of the several ecclesiastical orders were, however, gradually changed from the time that the church began to be agitated with those violent dissensions, to which the election of bishops and the diversity of religious opinions frequently gave rise. In these religious quarrels, the weaker generally fled to the court for protection; and thereby furnished the emperors with a favourable opportunity of setting limits to the power of the bishops, of infringing the liberties of the people, and of modifying, in various ways, the ancient customs. And the bishops themselves, whose opulence and authority were considerably increased since the reign of Constantine, began to introduce, gradually, innovations into the forms of ecclesiastical discipline. Their first step was an entire exclusion of the people from all part in ecclesiastical affairs; and afterwards they, by degrees, divested even the *presbyters* of their ancient privileges, that they might have no protesters to controul their ambition, and, principally, that they might either engross to themselves or distribute, as they thought proper, the revenues of the church. Hence it came to pass, that, at the conclusion of this century, there remained no more than a mere shadow of the ancient government of the church. Many of the privileges, which had formerly belonged to the presbyters and people, were usurped by the bishops: and many of the rights, which had been formerly vested in the
universal

universal church, were transferred to the emperors, and to subordinate officers and magistrates.

III. Constantine the Great, in order to fix his authority upon solid foundations, made several changes, not only in the laws of the empire, but also in the form of the Roman government. And as there were many reasons, which induced him to suit the administration of the church to the civil constitution, this necessarily introduced, among the bishops, new degrees of eminence. Three prelates had, before this, enjoyed a pre-eminence over the rest, viz. the bishops of Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria; and to these the bishop of Constantinople was added, when the imperial residence was transferred to that city. These four prelates answered to the four *prætorian præfects* created by Constantine; and in this very century, they were distinguished by the Jewish title of Patriarchs. After these, followed the *exarchs*, who had the inspection over several provinces, and answered to certain civil officers who bore the same title. In a lower class, were the *Metropolitans*, who had the government of one province, under whom were the *archbishops*, whose inspection was confined to certain districts. In this gradation, the bishops brought up the rear; their authority was not, in all places, equally extensive; being in some ample, and in others confined within narrow limits. To these various orders, we might add that of the *chorepiscopi*, or superintendents of the country churches; but this order was, in most places, suppressed by the bishops, to extend their own authority.

IV. The administration of the church was divided, by Constantine, into an external and an internal inspection. The latter, which was committed to bishops and councils, related to *religious*

ous controversies; the forms of divine worship; the offices of the priests; and the vices of the ecclesiastical orders. The external administration of the church, the emperor assumed to himself. This comprehended all those things that relate to the outward state and discipline of the church; it likewise extended to all contests that should arise between the ministers of the church, superior, or inferior, concerning their possessions, their reputation, their rights and privileges, and their offences against the law; but no controversies that related to matters purely religious, were cognizable by this external inspection. In consequence of this artful division of the ecclesiastical government, Constantine and his successors called councils, presided in them, appointed the judges of religious controversies, terminated the differences which arose between the bishops and the people, fixed the limits of the ecclesiastical provinces, took cognizance of the civil causes between the ministers of the church, and punished the crimes committed against the laws by the ordinary judges appointed for that purpose; giving over all causes purely ecclesiastical to the cognizance of bishops and councils. But this famous division of the administration of the church was never explained with perspicuity; so that both in this, and the following centuries, we find many transactions that seem absolutely inconsistent with it. We find the emperors, frequently determining matters purely ecclesiastical; and on the other hand, nothing is more frequent than the decisions of bishops and councils concerning things that relate merely to the external government of the church.

V. In the episcopal order, the bishop of Rome was distinguished by a sort of pre-eminence over all

all other prelates. He surpassed all his brethren in the splendor of the church over which he presided; in the riches of his revenues; in the number and variety of his ministers; and in his sumptuous and splendid manner of living. These dazzling marks of power had such an influence upon the minds of the multitude, that the see of Rome became, in this century, a most seducing object of sacerdotal ambition. Hence it happened, that when a new pontiff was to be elected by the presbyters and people, the city was agitated with dissensions, tumults, and cabals, whose consequences were often deplorable. The disturbances, that prevailed in that city in the year 366, when, upon the death of Liberius, another pontiff was to be chosen, are a proof of what we have now advanced. Upon this occasion, one faction elected Damasus, while the opposite chose Ursicinus, a deacon of the vacant church. This double election gave rise to a sort of civil war within the city, which was carried on with the utmost barbarity and produced the most cruel massacres and desolations. This inhuman contest ended in the victory of Damasus; but whether his cause was more just than that of Ursicinus, is a question. Neither of the two seem to have been possessed of such principles as constitute a Christian, much less of that virtue, that should distinguish a Christian bishop.

VI. But notwithstanding the pomp that surrounded the Roman see, the bishops of that city had not acquired, in this century, that pre-eminence of power and jurisdiction which they afterwards enjoyed. In the ecclesiastical commonwealth, they were the most eminent order of citizens; but still they were citizens as well as their brethren, and subject, like them, to the

edicts and laws of the emperors. All religious causes of importance were determined, either by judges appointed by the emperors, or in councils assembled for that purpose; while those of inferior moment were decided, in each district, by its respective bishop. The ecclesiastical laws were enacted either by the emperor or by councils. None of the bishops acknowledged, that they derived their authority from the bishop of Rome, or that they were created bishops by the *favour of the apostolic see*. On the contrary, they all maintained, that they were the ambassadors of Jesus Christ, and that their authority was derived from above. Yet, even in this century, several of those steps were laid, by which the bishops of Rome mounted afterwards to the summit of power; partly by the imprudence of the emperors, partly by the dexterity of the Roman prelates themselves.

VII. But Constantine the Great, by removing the seat of the empire to Byzantium, and building the city of Constantinople, raised up, in the bishop of this new metropolis, a formidable rival to the Roman pontiff. For, as the emperor, in order to render Constantinople a second Rome, enriched it with all the privileges of the ancient capital; so its bishop, measuring his own rank by the magnificence of the new city, and its eminence, as the residence of the emperor, assumed an equal dignity with the bishop of Rome, and claimed a superiority over all the rest of the episcopal order. Nor did the emperors disapprove of these high pretensions, since they considered their own dignity as connected with that of the bishop of their imperial city. Accordingly, in a council held at Constantinople, in the year 381, by the authority of Theodosius the Great, the

the bishop of that city was, against the consent of the Roman prelate, placed, by the third canon of that council, in the first rank after the bishop of Rome, and, consequently, above those of Alexandria and Antioch. Nestarius was the first bishop, who enjoyed these new honours. His successor, the celebrated John Chrysostom, extended still further the privileges of that see, and submitted to its jurisdiction all Thrace, Asia, and Pontus; nor were the succeeding bishops of that city destitute of zeal to augment their privileges, and to extend their dominion.

This unexpected promotion of the bishop of Byzantium, not only filled the bishops of Alexandria with the bitterest aversion to those of Constantinople, but also excited those deplorable contentions between these latter and the Roman pontiffs, which concluded, at length, in the entire separation of the Latin and Greek churches.

VIII. The additions made to the wealth, honours, and advantages of the clergy, were followed with a proportionable augmentation of vices, particularly among those of that sacred order, who lived in opulent cities; and that many such additions were made to that order after the time of Constantine, is a matter that admits of no dispute. The *bishops*, on the one hand, contended with each other, in the most scandalous manner, concerning the extent of their respective jurisdictions, while, on the other, they trampled upon the rights of the people, violated the privileges of the inferior ministers, and imitated, in their manner of living, the arrogance, voluptuousness, and luxury of princes. This example was soon followed by the several ecclesiastical orders. The *presbyters*, in many places, assumed an equality with the bishops in point of authority. We find

also many complaints of the vanity and effeminacy of the *deacons*. Those more particularly of the presbyters and deacons, who filled the first stations of these orders, carried their pretensions to an extravagant length, and were offended at the notion of being placed upon an equal footing with their colleagues. For this reason, they not only assumed the titles of *Archpresbyters* and *Archdeacons*, but also claimed a degree of authority much superior to that which was vested in the other members of their respective orders.

IX. Several writers of great reputation lived in this century, and were shining ornaments to the countries to which they belonged. Among those that flourished in Greece and in the eastern provinces, the following seem to deserve the first rank:

Athanasius, patriarch of Alexandria, celebrated on account of his learned and pious labours, and particularly for his vigorous opposition to the Arians.

Basil, surnamed the Great, bishop of Cæsarea, who, in point of genius, controversial skill, and a rich and flowing eloquence, was surpassed by very few in this century.

Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, who has left some catechetical discourses, which he delivered in that city.

John, surnamed Chrysostom, on account of his extraordinary eloquence, a man of a noble genius, governed successively the churches of Antioch and Constantinople, and left behind him several monuments of his profound and extensive erudition; as also discourses which he had preached with vast applause, and which are yet extant.

Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis, in the isle of Cyprus, wrote a book against all the heresies that had

had sprung up, but this work is full of inaccuracies and errors, and discovers almost in every page the levity and ignorance of its author.

Gregory Nazianzen, and Gregory of Nyssa, have obtained a very honourable place among the theological and polemic writers of this century. Their reputation, indeed, would have been yet more confirmed, had they been less attached to the writings of Origen and the vitious eloquence of the sophists.

Ephraim, the Syrian, who has acquired an immortal name by the sanctity of his manners, and by those excellent writings in which he has combated the sectaries, explained the sacred writings, and unfolded the duties and obligations of Christians.

X. The Latins also were not without writers of considerable note, the principal of whom we shall point out.

Hilary, bishop of Poitiers, acquired a name by *twelve books concerning the Trinity*, which he wrote against the Arians, and several other productions. He was a man of penetration and genius; notwithstanding which, he has, for the most part, copied in his writings Tertullian and Origen.

Lactantius, the most eloquent of the Latin writers in this century, exposed the absurdity of the Pagan superstitions in his *Divine Institutions*, which are written with uncommon purity and elegance.

Ambrose, prefect, and afterwards bishop of Milan, was not destitute of a certain degree of elegance both of genius and style; his sentiments of things were, by no means, absurd; but he did not escape the prevailing defect of that age, a want of accuracy and order.

Jerome, a monk of Palestine, rendered, by his learned and zealous labours, such eminent services to the Christian cause, as will hand down his name with honour to the latest posterity. But his illustrious merit was accompanied and obscured by very great defects. His complexion was excessively warm and choleric; his bitterness against those who differed from him, extremely keen; and his thirst of glory insatiable. He was so prone to censure, that several persons, whose lives were not only irreproachable, but even exemplary, became the objects of his unjust accusations. All this, joined to his superstitious turn of mind, sunk his reputation greatly.

The fame of Augustin, bishop of Hippo, in Africa, filled the whole Christian world; and not without reason, as a variety of shining qualities were united in his character. A sublime genius, a zealous pursuit of truth, an indefatigable application, an invincible patience, a sincere piety, and a subtil and lively wit, conspired to establish his fame. It is however certain, that the accuracy and solidity of his judgment were, by no means, proportionable to his wit; and that, upon many occasions, he was more guided by a warm imagination, than by cool reason. Hence that ambiguity in his writings, which has rendered the most attentive readers uncertain with respect to his real sentiments; and hence also the just complaints of the contradictions that are so frequent in his works.

Rufinus, presbyter of Aquileia, is famous on account of his Latin translations of Origen and other Greek writers, his commentaries on several passages of the holy scriptures, and his bitter contest with Jerome. He would have obtained a very honourable place among the Latin writers
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of this century, had it not been his misfortune to have had the powerful and foul-mouthed Jerome for his adversary.

C H A P. III.

Concerning the doctrine of the Christian church in this century.

I. **T**HE fundamental principles of the Christian doctrine were preserved hitherto entire in most churches, though they were often explained and defended in a manner that discovered the greatest ignorance. The disputes carried on in the council of Nice, concerning the three persons in the God-head, afford a remarkable example of this, particularly in the language of those who approved of the decisions of that council.

Nor did the evil end here; for those vain fictions, which an attachment to the Platonic philosophy, had engaged the greatest part of the Christian doctors to adopt, were now confirmed and enlarged. From hence arose that extravagant veneration for departed saints, and those absurd notions of a certain *fire* destined to purify separate souls, that now prevailed. Hence also the celibacy of priests, the worship of images and relicks, which, in process of time, almost utterly destroyed the Christian religion.

II. An enormous train of different superstitions were gradually substituted in the place of true religion. This revolution was greatly owing to a desire of imitating the Pagan rites, and of blending them with the Christian worship, and to that idle propensity which the generality of mankind have

have towards a gaudy and ostentatious religion. Accordingly, frequent pilgrimages were undertaken to Palestine, and to the tombs of the martyrs. The reins being once let loose to superstition, absurd notions and idle ceremonies multiplied every day. Quantities of dust and earth brought from Palestine, and other places remarkable for their supposed sanctity, were handed about as powerful remedies against the violence of wicked spirits, and were sold and bought every where at enormous prices. The public processions and supplications, by which the Pagans endeavoured to appease their gods, were now adopted into the Christian worship. The virtues that had formerly been ascribed to the heathen temples, to their lustrations, to the statues of their gods and heroes, were now attributed to Christian churches, to water consecrated by certain forms of prayer, and to the images of holy men. And the same privileges, that the former enjoyed under the darkness of paganism, were conferred upon the latter under the light of the gospel, or, rather, under that cloud of superstition that was obscuring its glory. It is true, that, as yet, images were not common; nor were there any statues at all. But the worship of the *martyrs* was modelled, by degrees, according to the religious services that were paid to the gods before the coming of Christ.

III. And now rumours were artfully spread abroad of miracles to be seen in certain places (a trick often practised by the heathen priests) and the design of these reports was to draw the populace to these places, and to impose upon their credulity. These stratagems were generally successful; for the ignorance of the people, to whom every thing, that is new and singular, appears miraculous,

raculous, rendered them easily the dupes of this abominable artifice. Nor was this all; certain tombs were falsely given out for the sepulchres of saints and confessors; the list of the saints was augmented with fictitious names, and even robbers were converted into martyrs. Yea, some buried the bones of dead men in certain retired places, and then affirmed, that they were divinely admonished by a dream, that the body of some friend of God lay there.

IV. Many of the learned, in this century, undertook translations of the holy scriptures, but few succeeded in this enterprize. Among the many Latin versions of the sacred books, that of Jerome was distinguished by its undoubted superiority. And the same ingenious writer, whose skill in the languages was, by no means, inconsiderable, employed much pains upon the Greek version of the seventy interpreters, in order to give a more correct edition of it than had appeared before his time.

V. Origen was the great model, whom the most eminent of the Christian doctors followed in their explications of the truths of the gospel, which were, of consequence, explained according to the rules of the Platonic philosophy. Those who desire a more ample account of this matter, may consult Gregory Nazianzen among the Greeks, and Augustin among the Latins, who were followed, for a long time, as the only patterns worthy of imitation, and who, next to Origen, may be considered as the parents and supporters of the *philosophical* or *scholastic theology*.

This, however, was not the only sect that flourished at this time. Those, who maintained, that the knowledge of divine things was to be acquired, not by reasoning, but by contemplation, and

and by turning the eye of the mind upon itself in an entire absence from all external and sensible objects, became now more numerous every day. This appears, particularly, from the swarms of monks that almost overspread the Christian world; and also from the books of Dionysius, the pretended chief of the Mystics, which seem to have been forged in, or not long after this century.

VI. If the growth and perfection of a science were to be estimated by the multitude of writers it produces, that of *morals* must have flourished greatly at this time, for the number of moral writers was very considerable. Among the eastern writers, James, bishop of Nisibis, and Ephraim, bishop of Syria, became eminent for their zeal in inculcating the precepts of morality. The writings of Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustin, and several others, upon moral subjects, are neither worthy of high encomiums, nor of entire contempt, as they contain a strange mixture of excellent reflexions, and insipid details concerning the duties of the Christian life. Among the productions of these writers, many give the preference to the three books of Ambrose, *concerning the duty of the ministers of the church*, which are written in the manner of Cicero, and are justly commended for the pious intention they discover, and the beautiful sentiments they contain. But Macarius, an Egyptian monk, undoubtedly deserves the first rank among the practical writers of this time, as his works displayed, some few things excepted, the most lovely portraiture of virtue.

VII. The prodigious number of monks and sequestered virgins, upon the return of tranquillity to the church, now over-ran the whole Christian world with an amazing rapidity. Many of this order

order of men had, for a long time, been known among the Christians, and had led solitary lives in the deserts of Egypt; but Antony was the first who formed them into a regular body, engaged them to live in society with each other, and prescribed to them fixed rules for the direction of their conduct. These regulations which Antony had made in Egypt, were, the year following, introduced into Palestine and Syria by his disciple Hilarion. Almost about the same time, Aones and Eugenius, with their companions, Gaddanas and Azyzus, instituted the monastic order in Mesopotamia, and the adjacent countries; and their example was followed with such success, that, in a short time, the whole east was filled with a lazy set of mortals, who, abandoning all human connexions, and concerns, wore out a languishing life amidst the hardships of want, and various kinds of suffering, in order to arrive at a more close communion with God.

VIII. From the east this gloomy institution passed into the west, and first into Italy, and its neighbouring islands. St. Martin, the celebrated bishop of Tours, erected the first monasteries in Gaul, and recommended this religious solitude with such power, both by his instructions and his example, that his funeral is said to have been attended by no less than two thousand monks. From hence, the monastic discipline extended, gradually, through the other provinces of Europe.

It is, however, proper to observe, that there was a great difference in point of austerity between the western and oriental monks; the former of whom could never be brought to bear the severe rules, to which the latter voluntarily submitted.

IX. The monastic order, of which we have been taking a general view, was distributed into several

several classes. It was first divided into two distinct orders, of which the one received the denomination of Cœnobites, the other that of Eremites. The former lived together, and made up one large community under a chief, whom they called *father*, or *abbat*, which signifies the same thing in the Egyptian language. The latter drew out a wretched life in perfect solitude, and were scattered here and there in caves, in deserts, in the hollow of rocks, sheltered from the wild beasts only by the cover of a miserable cottage, in which each one lived sequestered from the rest of his species.

Many of the Cœnobites were chargeable with vitious and scandalous practices. As to the Eremites, they seem to have deserved no other reproach than that of a delirious and extravagant piety. All the different monastic orders were hitherto composed of the *laity*, and were subject to the jurisdiction of the bishops. But many of them were now adopted among the *clergy*, and that even by the command of the emperors. Nay, the fame of monastic sanctity became so universal, that bishops were frequently chosen out of that order.

X. If the enthusiastic frenzy of the monks was pernicious to the interests of morality; the interests of religion suffered yet more by two monstrous errors which were almost universally adopted in this century. The first of these was, that *it was an act of virtue, to deceive and lye, when by that means the interests of the church might be promoted*; the second, that *errors in religion, when adhered to after proper admonition, were punishable with civil penalties and corporal tortures*. The former of these erroneous maxims was now of a long standing; it had been adopted for some ages past,

past, and had produced an incredible number of ridiculous fables, fictitious prodigies, and pious frauds. The latter was introduced with those serene times which the accession of Constantine to the imperial throne procured to the church. It was from that period approved by many, confirmed and established by the authority of Augustin, and thus transmitted to the following ages.

XI. When we cast an eye on the lives of Christians at this time, we find, as formerly, a mixture of good and evil; some eminent for their piety, others infamous for their crimes. But the number of immoral Christians began so to increase, that the examples of real piety were extremely rare. When the terrors of persecution were totally dispelled; when the church enjoyed the sweets of prosperity; when most of the bishops exhibited to their flock the contagious examples of arrogance, luxury, effeminacy, animosity, and strife, with other vices too numerous to mention; when the inferior rulers of the church fell into a total negligence of the duties of their stations, and employed, in vain wranglings, that zeal and attention, that were due to the instruction of their people; and when (to compleat the enormity) multitudes were drawn into the profession of Christianity, not by the power of conviction and argument, but by the prospect of gain and the fear of punishment; then it was no wonder that the church was contaminated with shoals of profligate Christians, and that the virtuous few were oppressed and overwhelmed with the numbers of the wicked and licentious. It is true, there were the same laws of penitence, which had taken place before Constantine the Great, but when corruption becomes universal, the vigour of the laws yields to its sway, and a weak execution

defeats the purposes of the most salutary discipline. Such was now the case; the age was sinking daily from one period of corruption to another; the great and the powerful sinned with impunity; and the indigent alone felt the severity of the laws.

XII. The progress of superstition in this century, and the erroneous notions that prevailed concerning the true nature of religion, excited the zeal and the efforts of many to stem the torrent. But their labours only exposed them to reproach. The most eminent of these opposers of the reigning superstitions was Jovinian, an Italian monk, who, towards the conclusion of this century, taught first at Rome, and afterwards at Milan, that all those who kept the vows they made to Christ at their baptism, and lived according to the rules laid down in the gospel, had an equal title to the rewards of futurity; and that, consequently, those who passed their days in unsociable solitude and severe mortifications, were no more acceptable in the eye of God, than those who nourished their bodies with moderation and temperance. But these judicious opinions, which many began to adopt, were first condemned by the church of Rome, and afterwards, by Ambrose, in a council held at Milan in the year 390. The emperor Honorius seconded the bishops by the secular arm, and banished this heretic to the island Boa. Jovinian published his opinions in a book, against which Jerome wrote a most bitter and abusive treatise, which is still extant.

C H A P. IV.

Concerning the rites and ceremonies used in the church during this century.

I. **W**HILE the Roman emperors were studious to promote the honour of Christianity, the ill-directed piety of the bishops cast a cloud over the beauty and simplicity of the gospel, by the prodigious number of rites and ceremonies which they invented. And here we may apply that well-known saying of Augustin, that *the yoke under which the Jews formerly groaned, was more tolerable than that imposed upon many Christians in his time.* The rites and institutions, by which the Greeks, Romans, and other nations had formerly testified their religious veneration for fictitious deities, were now adopted, with some slight alterations, by Christian bishops, and employed in the service of the true God. These fervent heralds of the gospel imagined the nations would receive Christianity with more facility, when they saw the rites and ceremonies to which they were accustomed, adopted in the church, and the same worship paid to Christ and his martyrs, which they had formerly offered to their idol-deities. Hence in these times the religion of the Greeks and Romans differed very little in its external appearance from that of the Christians. They had both a most pompous ritual. Gorgeous robes, mitres, tiaras, wax-tapers, crofiers,^a processions, lustrations, images, gold and

^a The *Lituus*, which, among the ancient Romans, was the chief ensign of the augurs, and which derived its name from its resemblance of the *military trumpet*, became a mark of episcopal dignity. We call it the *crofier*, or bishop's staff.

silver vases, and many such circumstances of pagantry were equally to be seen in the heathen temples and the Christian churches.

II. No sooner had Constantine the Great abolished the superstitions of his ancestors, than magnificent churches were every where erected for the Christians, which were richly adorned with pictures and images, and bore a striking resemblance of the Pagan temples. Of these churches some were built over the tombs of martyrs, and were frequented only at stated times; while others were set apart for the ordinary assemblies of Christians in divine worship. Both of them were consecrated with great pomp, and with certain rites borrowed, mostly, from the ancient laws of the Roman pontiffs.

At this time it was looked upon as an essential part of religion to have, in every country, a multitude of churches: and here we must look for the true origin of what is called the *right of patronage*, which was introduced among Christians with no other view than to encourage the opulent to erect a great number of churches, by giving them the privilege of appointing the ministers that were to officiate in them. This was a new instance of a servile imitation of the ancient superstitions: for the people of old thought themselves happy and free from danger, in proportion to the number of temples, which they consecrated to the worship of gods and heroes. The Christians unhappily contracted the same way of thinking. The greater the number of temples was, erected in honour of Christ, and his chosen friends and followers, the more sanguine did their expectations grow of powerful succours from them.

III. The Christian worship consisted in hymns, prayers, the reading of the scriptures, a discourse addressed

addressed to the people, and concluded with the celebration of the Lord's supper. To these were added various rites, more adapted to please the eyes, and strike the imagination, than to kindle in the heart the sacred flame of genuine piety. Not that the same method of worship was uniformly followed in every Christian society. Every bishop, consulting his own private judgment, and taking into consideration the nature of the times, the genius of the country in which he lived, and the temper of those whom he was appointed to rule, formed such a plan of divine worship as he thought the best. Hence that variety of *liturgies* which were in use, before the bishop of Rome usurped the supreme power in religious matters, and persuaded the credulous that the model both of doctrine and worship was to be given by the mother-church, and to be followed implicitly throughout the Christian world.

IV. It would be almost endless to enter into a minute detail of all the different parts of public worship, and the changes they underwent. A few observations will be sufficient. The public prayers had now lost much of their solemn and majestic simplicity, and were degenerating into a vain and swelling bombast. The sermons, addressed to the people, were rather adapted to excite admiration, than to enlighten the understanding, or to reform the heart. Nay, it would seem as if all possible means had been used, to give an air of extravagance to the Christian assemblies. For the people were exhorted by the preacher himself, to crown his talents with clapping of hands and loud acclamations; a recompense that was hitherto peculiar to the actors on the theatre, and the orators in the Forum.

V. The first day of the week, which was the stated time for the public assemblies of Christians, was, in consequence of a peculiar law enacted by Constantine, observed with more solemnity than it had formerly been. The festivals celebrated in most of the Christian churches, were five in number, and were appointed in commemoration of the birth, the sufferings and death, the resurrection, and the ascension of the divine Saviour; and also of the effusion of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. Of these festivals, none were kept with so much solemnity, as the fourteen days, that were appointed for the commemoration of Christ's resurrection.

The eastern Christians celebrated the memory of Christ's birth and baptism in one festival, which was fixed on the sixth of January, and this day was by them called the Epiphany, as on it he was manifested to the world. On the other hand, the Christians of the west celebrated the birth of our Lord on the twenty fifth of December.

The success which some had in discovering the carcases of holy men, multiplied the *commemorations of the martyrs* in the most extravagant manner: and these days, which were set apart for pious exercises, were squandered away in indolence, voluptuousness, and criminal pursuits, and were less consecrated to the service of God, than employed in the indulgence of sinful passions.

VI. The *Quadragesimal*, or *Lent fast*, was held more sacred than all other fasts, though it was not as yet confined to a fixed number of days. But the *fasts* observed in this century, were very different from those that were solemnized in the preceding times. Formerly those who fasted, abstained wholly from meat and drink: but now a mere abstinence from flesh and wine was judged sufficient.

sufficient. And this latter opinion prevailed from this time, and became universal among the Latins.

VII. Baptismal fonts were now erected in the porch of each church, for the more commodious administration of that sacrament. *Baptism* was administered during the vigils of Easter and Whitsuntide, with lighted tapers, by the bishop and the presbyters commissioned by him for that purpose. In cases however of urgent necessity, and in such only, a dispensation was granted for performing this sacred rite at other times. In some places *salt* was employed, as a symbol of purity and wisdom, and was thrown, with this view, into the mouth of the person baptized; and a *double unction* was every where used in the celebration of this ordinance, one preceding its administration, and the other following it. The persons who were admitted into the church, by baptism, were obliged, after the celebration of that holy ordinance, to go clothed in white garments during the space of seven days.

VIII. The institution of *catechumens*, and the discipline through which they passed, suffered no variation in this century. It appears farther, that the Lord's supper was administered (in some places two or three times a week, in others, on Sunday only) to all those who were assembled together to worship God. It was also sometimes celebrated at the tombs of martyrs and at funerals, which custom, undoubtedly, gave rise to the *masses*, that were afterwards performed in honour of the saints, and for the benefit of the dead. In many places, the bread and wine were held up to view before their distribution, that they might be seen by the people, and contemplated with a certain religious respect; and hence, not long after, the *adoration of the symbols* was unquestionably derived.

C H A P. V.

Concerning the divisions and heresies that troubled the church during this century.

I. **T**HE sects which had sprung up in the preceding ages, transmitted their contagious principles to this century. Many of them remained, particularly in the east; but the Manichean faction surpassed the rest in its progress. Neither the force of argument, nor the severity of the laws, were sufficient to extirpate it. For some time indeed it seemed to disappear, but it broke out afterwards with new violence.

II. But a new and much more formidable faction started up in Africa, which, though it arose from small beginnings, afflicted both church and state for more than a century. Its origin was as follows :

Mensurius, bishop of Carthage, dying in the year 311, the greatest part of the clergy and people chose, in his place, the archdeacon Cæcilianus, who, without waiting for the assembly of the Numidian bishops, was consecrated by those of Africa alone. The Numidian bishops, who had always been present at the consecration of the bishops of Carthage, were highly offended; and assembling themselves at Carthage, called Cæcilianus before them, to give an account of his conduct. The flame was augmented by certain Carthaginian presbyters, who were competitors with Cæcilianus, particularly Botrus and Celestius. Cæcilianus, refusing to submit to the judgment of the Numidians, was condemned in a council, assembled by Secundus, bishop of Tigisis, consisting of seventy prelates, who declared him unworthy

worthy of the episcopal dignity, and chose his deacon Majorinus for his successor. By this proceeding, the Carthaginian church was divided into two factions, and groaned under the contests of two rival bishops, Cæcilianus and Majorinus. There was none of the Numidians, who opposed Cæcilianus with such bitterness, as Donatus bishop of *Casa nigra*, and hence the whole faction was called Donatists. This controversy, in a short time, spread not only throughout Numidia, but through all the provinces of Africa, which entered so zealously into this war, that in most cities there were two bishops, one at the head of Cæcilianus's party, and the other acknowledged by the followers of Majorinus.

III. The Donatists having brought this controversy before Constantine the Great, that emperor, in the year 313, appointed Melchiades, bishop of Rome, to examine the matter, and named three bishops of Gaul, to assist him in this inquiry. The result of this examination was favourable to Cæcilianus, who was entirely acquitted of the crimes laid to his charge. But the Donatists complained much of the judgment pronounced by Melchiades. They looked upon the decision of seventy Numidian prelates, as more respectable than that pronounced by nineteen bishops (for such was the number assembled at Rome.) The indulgent emperor, willing to remove these complaints, ordered a much more numerous assembly to meet at Arles in the year 314, composed of bishops from various provinces, from Italy, Gaul, Germany, and Spain. Here again the Donatists lost their cause, but renewed their efforts by appealing to the immediate judgment of the emperor, who condescended so far, as to admit their appeal; and examined the whole

whole affair himself in the year 316 at Milan, in presence of the contending parties. The issue of this third trial was not more favourable to the Donatists than that of the two preceding councils, whose decisions the emperor confirmed by the sentence he pronounced. Hence this perverse sect loaded Constantine with the bitterest reproaches, as having passed an unrighteous sentence. The emperor, animated with indignation, deprived the Donatists of their churches in Africa, and sent into banishment their seditious bishops. Nay, he put some of them to death, probably on account of the intolerable petulance and malignity they discovered both in their writings and in their discourse. Hence arose violent commotions in Africa, as the sect of the Donatists was extremely powerful there. The emperor endeavoured, by embassies, to allay these disturbances, but without effect.

IV. These commotions gave rise to a confederacy of desperate ruffians, who passed under the name of Circumcelliones. This furious and bloody set of men, composed of the rough and savage populace, who embraced the party of the Donatists, maintained their cause by the force of arms, and, over-running all Africa, filled that province with slaughter and rapine, and committed the most enormous acts of perfidy and cruelty against the followers of Cæcilianus. But this contributed to render the sect of the Donatists an object of the utmost abhorrence; though it cannot be made appear that the bishops of that faction, either approved the proceedings, or stirred up the violence of this odious rabble. In the mean time, the flame of discord gathered strength daily, and seemed to portend a civil war; to prevent which, Constantine having tried,

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in vain, every other method, abolished at last the laws that had been enacted against the Donatists, and allowed the people a full liberty of adhering to the party they liked best.

V. After the death of Constantine the Great, his son Constans, to whom Africa was allotted in the division of the empire, sent Macarius and Paulus into that province, with a view to engage the Donatists to conclude a peace. Donatus, the principal bishop of that sect, opposed all methods of reconciliation, and his example was followed by the other prelates of the party. The Circumcelliones also continued to support the cause of the Donatists by assassinations and massacres, executed with the most unrelenting fury. They were, however, stopt in their career, and defeated by Macarius at the battle of Bagnia. Upon this, the affairs of the Donatists declined apace; and Macarius used no longer persuasion to engage them to an accommodation, but employed his authority. A few submitted: the greatest part saved themselves by flight; numbers were sent into banishment, among whom was Donatus; and many of them were punished with the utmost severity.

VI. The emperor Julian, upon his accession to the throne in the year 362, permitted the Donatists to return to their country, and restored them to their former liberty. This renewed the vigour of that expiring sect, who, on their return from banishment, brought, in a short time, the greatest part of the province of Africa to espouse their interests. Gratian, indeed, published several edicts against them, and, in the year 377, deprived them of their churches, and prohibited all their assemblies public and private. But the fury of the Circumcelliones, and the apprehension of intestine

intestine tumults, prevented the vigorous execution of these laws. This appears from the number of churches which this people had in Africa, towards the conclusion of this century, which were served by no less than four hundred bishops. Two things, however, diminished the power of this sect, and made it decline apace about the end of this century: the one was a violent division that arose among them on account of a person named Maximin: the other, the zealous opposition of Augustin, bishop of Hippo. This learned prelate attacked the Donatists in every way. In his writings, in his public discourses, and in his private conversation, he exposed the dangerous principles of this sect, in the strongest manner; and animated against them not only the province of Africa, but also the whole Christian world.

VII. The doctrine of the Donatists was conformable to that of the church, as even their adversaries confess; nor were their lives less exemplary than those of other Christian societies, if we except the enormous conduct of the Circumcelliones, which the greatest part of the sect regarded with abhorrence. The crime, therefore, of the Donatists lay properly in the following things; in their declaring the church of Africa, which adhered to Cæcilianus, fallen from the privileges of a true church; in their pronouncing all the churches, who held communion with that of Africa, corrupt and polluted; in maintaining that their community had a full right to be considered as the true, the pure, and holy church; and in their avoiding all communication with other churches, from an apprehension of contracting their impurity. This principle was the source of that shocking uncharitableness that appeared

peared in their conduct to other churches. Hence they pronounced the sacred rites void of all virtue among those Christians who were not precisely of their sentiments, and not only re-baptized those who came over to their party from other churches, but even deprived those, who had been ordained, of their office, or obliged them to be ordained a second time.

VIII. The faction of the Donatists was not the only one that troubled the church during this century. Soon after its commencement, even in the year 317, a new contention arose in Egypt, upon a subject of much higher importance. The subject of this fatal controversy was the doctrine of *three persons in the God-head*; a doctrine which, in the three preceding centuries, had happily escaped the vain curiosity of human researches. The church, indeed, had frequently decided against the Sabellians and others, that there was a real difference between the *Father* and the *Son*, and that the *Holy Ghost* was distinct from them both, or, as we commonly speak, that three distinct persons exist in the Deity; but the nature of that distinction was not hitherto either disputed or explained. Hence it happened, that the Christian doctors entertained different sentiments upon this subject without offence, and discoursed variously concerning the distinctions between *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*; each one following his respective opinion with the utmost liberty.

IX. In an assembly of the presbyters of Alexandria, the bishop of that city, whose name was Alexander, expressed his sentiments on this head with freedom; and maintained, that the Son was not only of the same eminence but also of the same *essence* with the Father. This assertion was

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opposed by Arius, one of the presbyters; but whether zeal for his own opinions, or personal resentment against his bishop was his motive, is not certain. He maintained, that the *Son* was totally and *essentially* distinct from the *Father*; that he was the *noblest* of those beings, whom God the *Father* had created out of nothing, and therefore inferior to the *Father* both in *nature* and in *dignity*. The opinions of Arius were no sooner divulged, than they found a multitude of abettors. Alexander, on the other hand, in two councils assembled at Alexandria, accused Arius, and caused him to be expelled from the church. Arius retired into Palestine, and wrote letters to the most eminent men of those times, in which he endeavoured to demonstrate the truth of his opinions, and that with such success, that vast numbers were drawn over to his party. The emperor Constantine contented himself at first with addressing a letter to the contending parties, in which he admonished them to put an end to their disputes. But when the prince saw that his admonitions were without effect, he assembled, at length, in the year 325, the famous council of Nice in Bithinia, wherein the deputies of the church universal were summoned to put an end to this controversy. In this general council, after many keen debates, the doctrine of Arius was condemned; and Christ declared *consubstantial*, or of the same essence with the Father.

X. The council assembled at Nice, is one of the most interesting events that are presented to us in ecclesiastical history; and yet, there is no part of the history of the church that has been unfolded with such negligence. The ancient writers are neither agreed concerning the time nor place

place in which it was assembled, the number of those who sat in council, nor the bishop who presided in it. No authentic acts of its famous sentence have been committed to writing, or, at least, none have been transmitted to our times.

The eastern Christians differ from all others both concerning the number and the nature of the laws that were enacted in this celebrated council. But they agree that Arius was condemned, and certain measures agreed upon, to calm the religious tumults that troubled the church. The controversy, concerning the time of celebrating Easter, was terminated; the troubles which Novatian had excited, by opposing the re-admission of the *lapsed* to the communion of the church, were composed; the jurisdiction of the greater bishops precisely determined; with several other matters of a like nature. But while these good prelates were employing all their zeal to correct the mistakes of others, they were upon the point of falling into a very capital one themselves. For they had almost come to a resolution of imposing upon the clergy the yoke of perpetual celibacy, when Paphnutius put a stop to their proceedings, and warded off that unnatural law.

XI. But notwithstanding all these determinations, the spirit of dissension triumphed both over the decrees of the council and the authority of the emperor. For those, who were far from being attached to the party of Arius, found many things reprehensible both in the council, and in the forms of expression which it employed to explain the controverted points; while the Arians, on the other hand, left no means untried to recover their credit in the church. And a few years after, a certain Arian priest, who had

been recommended to the emperor, in the dying words of his sister Constantia, found means to persuade Constantine the Great, that the condemnation of Arius was unjust. In consequence of this, the emperor recalled him from banishment in the year 328, repealed the laws that had been enacted against him, and permitted his vindictive faction, to vex and oppress the partisans of the Nicene council in various ways. Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, was one of those who suffered most from the violent measures of the Arian party. Invincibly firm in his purpose, he obstinately refused to restore Arius to his former rank and office. On this account he was deposed in the year 335, and was afterwards banished into Gaul, while Arius and his followers were, with great solemnity, reinstated in their privileges. The people of Alexandria, unmoved by these proceedings in favour of Arius, persisted to refuse him a place among their presbyters; upon which the emperor invited him to Constantinople in the year 336, and ordered Alexander, the bishop of that city, to admit him to his communion. But before this order could be put in execution, Arius died at Constantinople in a very dismal manner, his entrails falling out, and the emperor Constantine survived him but a short time.

XII. After the death of Constantine the Great, one of his sons, Constantius, who, in the division of the empire, became ruler of the east, was warmly attached to the Arian party, as was the empress, and, indeed, the whole court. On the other hand, Constantine and Constans, emperors of the west, maintained the decrees of the council of Nice. Hence arose endless animosities and seditions between the two contending parties.

Council

Council was assembled against council, and their contradictory decrees spread throughout the Christian world.

In the year 350, Constans was assassinated; and about two years after, a great part of the western empire, particularly Rome and Italy, fell into the hands of his brother Constantius. This change was extremely unfavourable to those who adhered to the decrees of the council of Nice. The emperor's attachment to the Arians animated him against their adversaries, whom he involved in various calamities, and obliged many of them, by threats and punishment, to come over to the sect which he esteemed. Among these forced profelytes was Liberius the Roman pontiff, who was compelled to embrace Arianism in the year 357.

XIII. The death of Constantius, in the year 362, diminished greatly the influence of the Arian party. Julian bestowed his protection on neither side, but treated them both with an impartiality which was the result of a perfect indifference. Jovian, his successor, declared himself in favour of the Nicene doctrine; and immediately the whole west, with a considerable part of the eastern provinces, changed sides, conformed to the decrees of the council of Nice, and abjured the Arian system.

The scene however changed again in the year 364, when Valentinian, and his brother Valens, were raised to the empire. Valentinian adhered to the decrees of the Nicene council; and hence the whole Arian sect, a few churches excepted, was destroyed in the west. Valens favoured the Arians; and his zeal for their cause exposed their adversaries, in the eastern provinces, to many sufferings. These troubles, how-

ever, ended with the reign of this emperor, who fell in a battle which was fought against the Goths in the year 378, and was succeeded by Gratian, a friend to the Nicenians, and the restorer of their tranquillity. His zeal for their interests, though fervent and active, was surpassed by that of his successor, Theodosius the Great, who raised the secular arm against the Arians with a terrible degree of violence, drove them from their churches, enacted laws, whose severity exposed them to the greatest calamities, and rendered, throughout his dominions, the decrees of the council of Nice triumphant over all opposition; so that the public profession of the Arian doctrine was confined to the barbarous and unconquered nations, such as the Burgundians, Goths, and Vandals.

During this long and violent contest between the Nicenians and Arians, the impartial will acknowledge, that unjustifiable measures were taken on both sides. So that when, abstracting from the merits of the cause, we only consider with what temper the parties defended their respective opinions, it will be difficult to determine which of the two exceeded most the bounds of probity, charity, and moderation.

XIV. The Gnostics, who had been so often vanquished, now broke out anew in Spain. This frenzy was transported thither, in the beginning of this century, by a certain person, named Mark of Memphis, in Egypt, whose converts at first were not very numerous. They increased, however, and counted in their number several persons highly eminent for their learning and piety. Among these was Priscillian, distinguished by his birth, fortune, and eloquence, and afterwards bishop of Abila. By the emperor
Gratian

Gratian he was banished with his followers from Spain, but was restored, some time after, by an edict of the same prince, to his country and his functions. But he was accused a second time, in the year 384, before Maximus, who had procured the assassination of Gratian, and made himself master of Gaul; and, by the order of that prince, was put to death, at Treves, with some of his associates. The agents, however, by whose barbarous zeal this sentence was obtained, were justly regarded with the utmost abhorrence by the bishops of Gaul and Italy; for Christians had not yet learned, that giving over heretics to be punished by the magistrate, was either an act of piety or justice.

The death of Priscillian was less pernicious to the progress of his opinions, than might naturally have been expected. His doctrine not only survived him, but was propagated through the greatest part of Spain and Gaul: and, even so far down as the sixth century, gave much trouble to the bishops and clergy in these provinces.

XV. None of the ancient writers have given an accurate account of the doctrine of the Priscillianists. But it seems that the difference between their doctrine, and that of the Manicheans, was not very considerable. For "they denied the *reality* of Christ's birth and incarnation; maintained, that the visible universe was not the production of the Supreme Deity, but of some *demon*, or malignant principle; considered human bodies as prisons formed, by the author of evil, to enslave celestial minds; condemned marriage, and disbelieved the resurrection of the body." Yet their rule of life and manners was rigid and severe; and the accounts which many have given of their lasciviousness and intemperance, are totally destitute of authority.

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Rome, which they plundered in the most dreadful manner. These calamities, which fell upon the western part of the empire, were followed by others still more dreadful under the succeeding emperors. A fierce and warlike people, issuing out of Germany, overspread Italy, Gaul, and Spain, the noblest of all the European provinces, and erected new kingdoms in these fertile countries; and Odoacer, at last, at the head of the Heruli, having conquered Augustulus, in the year 476, gave the mortal blow to the western empire, and reduced all Italy under his dominion. About sixteen years after this, Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths, made war upon these barbarian invaders, conquered Odoacer in several battles, and obtained, as the fruits of his victories, a kingdom for the Ostrogoths in Italy, which subsisted from the year 493 to 552.

These new monarchs of the west pretended to acknowledge the supremacy of the emperors at Constantinople; but, in reality, they ruled with an absolute independence, in their respective governments, and Theodoric left nothing remaining to the eastern emperors but a mere shadow of authority.

II. These constant wars, and the inexpressible calamities with which they were attended, were undoubtedly detrimental to the cause of Christianity. It must, however, be acknowledged, that the Christian emperors, especially those who ruled in the east, were active and assiduous in extirpating the remains of the ancient superstitions. Theodosius the younger distinguished himself in this, and many remarkable monuments of his zeal are still preserved; such as the laws which enjoined either the destruction of the heathen temples, or the dedication of them

them to Christ and his saints; and the edicts by which he abrogated the sacrilegious rites and ceremonies of Paganism, and removed from all offices and employments such as persevered in their Polytheism.

This spirit of reformation appeared with less vigour in the western empire. There the feasts of Saturn and Pan, the combats of the gladiators, and other rites that were instituted in honour of the Pagan deities, were celebrated with the utmost freedom; and persons of the highest rank professed publicly the religion of their idolatrous ancestors. This liberty was, however, from time to time, reduced within narrower limits; and all those public sports and festivals, that were more peculiarly incompatible with the genius of the Christian religion, were every where abolished.

III. The limits of the church continued to extend themselves, and gained ground daily upon the idolatrous nations both in the eastern and western empires. In the east, the inhabitants of mount Libanus and Antilibanus being dreadfully infested with wild beasts, implored the assistance of the famous Simeon the Stylite, of whom we shall have occasion to speak hereafter. Simeon gave them for answer, that the only effectual method of removing this calamity was to abandon the superstitious worship of their ancestors, and substitute the Christian religion in its place. The docility of this people, joined to the extremities to which they were reduced, engaged them to follow the counsels of this holy man. They embraced Christianity, and, in consequence of their conversion, they had the pleasure of seeing their savage enemies abandon their habitations. The same Simeon introduced the Christian worship
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into a certain district of the Arabians. To these instances of the progress of the gospel, we may add the conversion of a considerable number of Jews in the isle of Crete, who, finding themselves grossly deluded by an impostor, called *Moses Cretensis*, who gave himself out for the *Messiah*, opened their eyes, and embraced the Christian religion of their own accord.

IV. The German nations, who rent in pieces the Roman empire in the west, were not all converted to Christianity at the same time. Some of them had embraced the truth before the time of their incursion; such was the case of the Goths. Others, after having erected their little kingdoms, embraced the gospel, that they might live with more security amidst a people, who, in general, professed the Christian religion. With respect to the Burgundians, who inhabited the banks of the Rhine, and who passed from thence into Gaul, they embraced the gospel of their own accord, from a notion that Christ, or the God of the Romans, who had been represented to them as a most powerful being, would defend them against the incursions of the Huns. They afterwards sided with the Arian party, to which also the Vandals, Sueves, and Goths were zealously attached. All these fierce and warlike nations judged a religion excellent, in proportion to the success which crowned the arms of those that professed it, and esteemed, consequently, that doctrine the best, whose professors had gained the greatest number of victories. When therefore they saw the Romans possessed of an empire much more extensive than that of any other people, they concluded that Christ, their God, was of all others the most worthy of religious homage.

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V. It was the same principle and the same views that engaged Clovis, king of the Salii, a nation of the Franks, to embrace Christianity. This prince, whose signal valour was accompanied with barbarity, arrogance, and injustice, founded the kingdom of the Franks in Gaul, after having made himself master of a great part of that country, and meditated the conquest of the whole. His conversion to the Christian religion is dated from the battle he fought with the Alemans in the year 496, at a village called Tolbiacum, now Zulpick; in which, when the Franks began to give ground, and their affairs seemed desperate, he implored the assistance of Christ (whom his queen Clothildis, daughter of the king of the Burgundians, had often represented to him, in vain, as the *Son of the true God*) and solemnly engaged himself, by a vow, to worship him as his God, if he rendered him victorious. Victory decided in favour of the Franks; and Clovis, faithful to his engagement, received baptism at Rheims, towards the conclusion of that same year, after having been instructed by Remigius, bishop of that city, in the doctrines of the gospel. The example of the king had such a powerful effect upon the minds of his subjects, that three thousand of them were baptized with him. Many are of opinion, that the desire of extending his dominions was that which contributed principally to render Clovis faithful to his engagement; though some influence may also be allowed to the zeal and exhortations of his queen Clothildis. And nothing is more certain than that his profession of Christianity was of great use to him, both in confirming and enlarging his empire.

The miracles, which are said to have been wrought at the baptism of Clovis, are unworthy of the smallest degree of credit. Among others the principal prodigy, that of a phial full of oil said to be brought from heaven by a milk-white dove, during the ceremony of baptism, is, doubtless, a mere fiction. For Gregory of Tours, from whom we have a full account of the conversion and baptism of Clovis, and who, from his proximity to this time, may almost be called a contemporary writer, has not made the least mention of this famous miracle. This omission, in a writer whom the Roman Catholics themselves consider as an over-credulous historian, amounts to a proof, that, in his time, this fable was not yet invented.

The conversion of Clovis is looked upon by the learned as the origin of the titles of *Most Christian King*, and *eldest Son of the Church*, which have been so long attributed to the kings of France. For if we except this prince, all the kings of those barbarous nations, who seized upon the Roman provinces, were either involved in the darkness of paganism, or infected with the Arian heresy.

VI. Celestine, the Roman pontiff, sent Palladius into Ireland, to propagate the Christian religion among the rude inhabitants of that island. This first mission was not attended with much fruits; nor did the success of Palladius bear any proportion to his pious endeavours. After his death, the same pontiff employed, in this mission, Succathus, a native of Scotland, whose name he changed into that of Patrick, and who arrived among the Irish in the year 432. The success of his ministry, and the number of his pious exploits,

exploits, stand upon record as undoubted proofs not only of his resolution and patience, but also of his dexterity and address. Having attacked, with much more success than his predecessor, the errors and superstitions of that uncivilized people, and brought great numbers of them over to the Christian religion, he founded, in the year 472, the archbishopric of Armagh, which has ever since remained the metropolitan see of the Irish nation. Hence this famous missionary, though not the first who brought among that people the light of the gospel, has yet been justly intitled, *The apostle of the Irish*; and is still generally acknowledged and revered in that honourable character.

VII. The causes by which these different nations were engaged to abandon the superstition of their ancestors, may be easily deduced from the facts we have related. It must be acknowledged, that the labours and zeal of eminent men contributed to this happy purpose. But, on the other hand, they must be very inattentive who do not perceive that the fear of punishment, the prospect of honours and advantages, and the desire of obtaining succour against their enemies from the countenance of the Christians, were the prevailing motives that induced the greatest part to renounce the service of their impotent gods.

How far these conversions were due to miracles attending the ministry of these early preachers, is difficult to be determined. For though I am persuaded that those pious men, who, in the midst of many dangers, and in the face of obstacles seemingly invincible, endeavoured to spread the light of Christianity, were sometimes accompanied

accompanied with the peculiar succours of the Most High; yet I am equally convinced, that the greatest part of the prodigies, recorded in the histories of this age, are liable to the strongest suspicions of imposture. The simplicity and ignorance of those times furnished the most favourable occasion for the exercise of fraud; and the impudence of impostors was proportioned to the credulity of the vulgar; while the wise, who perceived these cheats, were obliged to silence by the dangers that threatened, if they detected the artifice.

C H A P. II.

Concerning the calamitous events which happened to the church during this century.

I. **I**T has been already observed, that the Goths, the Heruli, the Franks, the Huns, and the Vandals, with other fierce and warlike nations, for the most part strangers to Christianity, had invaded the Roman empire, and rent it asunder in the most deplorable manner. Amidst these calamities, the Christians were the principal sufferers. It is true, these savage nations were much more intent upon wealth and dominion, than the propagation of the Pagan superstitions; nor did their cruelty to the Christians arise from any religious principle; it was merely from the infligation of the Pagans, who remained yet in the empire. The hopes of recovering their former privileges by the means of their new masters, induced the worshippers of the gods to seize every opportunity of in-

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spiring them with the most bitter aversion to the Christians. Their endeavours, however, were without the desired effect; for the greatest part of these barbarians embraced Christianity; though it be true, that, in the beginning of their usurpations, the professors of that religion suffered heavily under their government.

II. In Gaul, and the neighbouring provinces, the Goths and Vandals, whose soldiery respected neither the majesty of religion nor the rights of humanity, committed acts of barbarity and violence against a multitude of Christians.

In Britain, a long series of tumults and divisions involved the Christians in many troubles. When the affairs of the Romans declined in that country, the Britons were tormented by the Picts and Scots, nations remarkable for their violence and ferocity. Hence, after many sufferings, they chose, in the year 445, Vortigern for their king. This prince, finding himself too weak to make head against the enemies of his country, called the Anglo-Saxons from Germany to his aid in the year 449. The consequences of this measure were pernicious; this people, who came as auxiliaries into Britain, oppressed it with calamities more grievous than those which it had suffered from its enemies. For the Saxons aimed at nothing less than to subdue the country, and to reduce the whole island under their dominion. Hence a most bloody war arose between the Britons and Saxons, which, after having been carried on, during the space of an hundred and thirty years, with various success, ended in the defeat of the Britons, who were forced to yield to the Anglo-Saxons, and to seek a retreat in Cornwall and Cambria. During these commotions, the
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state of the British church was deplorable beyond expression; it was almost totally extinguished by the Anglo-Saxons, who adhered to the worship of the gods, and put an immense number of Christians to the most cruel deaths.

III. In Persia, the Christians suffered grievously by the imprudent zeal of Abdas, bishop of Suza, who pulled down the *pyræum*, which was a temple dedicated to *fire*. For when this obstinate prelate was ordered by the king (Isdegerdes) to rebuild that temple, he refused; for which he was put to death in the year 414, and the churches of the Christians were levelled to the ground. This persecution was not, however, of long duration, but seems to have been extinguished soon after its commencement.

Varanes, the son of that monarch, treated the Christians in a manner yet more barbarous in the year 421, to which he was led partly by the instigation of the Magi, partly by his keen aversion to the Romans. For as often as the Persians and the Romans were at variance, so often did the Christians in Persia feel redoubled effects of their monarch's wrath; and this from a prevailing notion, that they favoured the Romans, and rendered services to them. In this persecution, a prodigious number of Christians perished in the most exquisite tortures. But they were, at length, delivered from these cruel oppressions by the peace that was made in the year 427, between Varanes and the Roman empire.

It was not from the Pagans only, that the Christians were exposed to suffering; they were moreover harrassed and oppressed in a variety of ways by the Jews, who lived in great
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opulence, and enjoyed a high degree of favour and credit in several parts of the east. Among these none treated them with greater rigour than Gamaliel, the patriarch of that nation, a man of the greatest power and influence, till his authority and violence were restrained in the year 415, by an express edict of Theodosius the younger.

PART II.

The INTERNAL HISTORY of the CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

Concerning the state of learning and philosophy.

I. **T**HE value of learning and the excellence of the *finer arts* were yet generally acknowledged among the thinking part of mankind. Hence public schools were erected in almost all the great cities, such as Constantinople, Rome, Marseilles, Edessa, Nisibis, Carthage, Lyons, and Treves; and public instructors set apart for the education of the youth, and maintained at the expence of the emperors. Several bishops and monks contributed also to the advancement of knowledge, by imparting to others their small stock of learning. But the incursions of the barbarous nations rendered the fruits of these establishments much less than their generous founders and promoters expected.

II. In the western provinces, and especially in Gaul, there were some men eminently distinguished by their learning, and every way proper to serve as models to the lower orders in the republic of letters. Of this we have abundant proof from the writings of Macrobius, Salvian, Vincentius, bishop of Liris, Ennodius, Sidonius Apollinaris, Claudian, and others, who, though in some respects inferior to the more celebrated authors of antiquity, are yet far from being destitute of elegance. But the barbarous nations, which either spread desolation, or formed settle-
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ments in the Roman territories, choked the growth of those genial seeds, which the hand of science had sowed in more auspicious times. These savage invaders, looking upon military courage as the only source of solid glory, beheld of consequence the arts and sciences with the utmost contempt. Wherever therefore they extended their conquests, ignorance and darkness followed their steps, and the culture of the sciences was confined to the priests and monks alone. And, even among these, learning degenerated from its primitive lustre. Amidst the seduction of corrupt examples, the alarms of perpetual danger, and the horrors and devastations of war, the Sacerdotal and monastic orders lost gradually all taste for solid science, in the place of which they substituted an enormous phantom of barbarous erudition. They indeed kept public schools, and instructed the youth in, what they called, the *Seven liberal arts*;* but these consisted only of a certain number of dry and useless precepts, more adapted to load the memory, than improve the judgment. So that, towards the conclusion of this century, the sciences were almost totally extinguished; at least, what remained of them was no more than a shadowy form, without either solidity or consistence.

III. The few that applied themselves to philosophy, had not yet embraced the doctrine or method of Aristotle. The doctrine of Plato had more reputation, which it had enjoyed for several ages, and was considered not only as less subtil and difficult, but as more conformable to the spirit of the Christian religion. The most valuable

* Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Arithmetic, Music, Geometry, and Astronomy.

of Plato's works were translated into Latin, and thus adapted to general use. And all, among the Latins, who had any inclination to the study of truth, fell into the Platonic notions.

IV. The fate of learning was less deplorable among the Greeks and Orientals, than in the western provinces; not only polite literature, but the more solid and profound sciences, were cultivated by them with tolerable success. Hence we find among them more writers of genius and learning than in other countries. Those, who inclined to the study of law, resorted generally to Berytus, famous for its learned academy, or to Alexandria, which was also frequented by the students of physic and chemistry. The professors of eloquence, poetry, philosophy, and the other liberal arts, taught the youth in public schools, which were erected in almost every city. Those however of Alexandria, Constantinople, and Edessa, were looked upon as superior to all others.

V. The modern Platonics retained, among the Syrians and Alexandrians, a considerable part of their ancient splendor. Olympiodorus, Hero, and other philosophers of the first rank, added a lustre to the Alexandrian school. That of Athens was rendered famous by Theophrastus, Plutarch, and his successor Syrian. These were the instructors of the renowned Proclus, who far surpassed all the Platonic philosophers, and acquired such a high degree of the public esteem, as enabled him to give new life to the doctrine of Plato. Ammonius the son of Hermias, Isidorus, and Damascius, the disciples of Proclus, followed the traces of their master. But the daily progress of the Christian religion gradually diminished the lustre of these philosophers. And as there
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were many of the Christian doctors who adopted the Platonic system, and explained it to the youth, this hindered the schools of these heathen sages from being so much frequented as they had formerly been.

VI. The credit of the Platonic philosophy, and the preference that was given to it, did not prevent the doctrine of Aristotle from coming to light after a long struggle. The Platonics themselves interpreted, in their schools, some of the writings of Aristotle, particularly his *Dialectics*, and recommended that work to such of the youth as had a taste for logical discussions. In this, the Christian doctors imitated the heathen schools; and this was the first step to that universal dominion, which the Stagirite afterward obtained in the republic of letters. A second, and a yet larger stride, which the Aristotelian philosophy made towards this universal empire, was, during the controversies which Origen had occasioned, and the Arian, Eutychian, Nestorian, and Pelagian dissensions. Origen, as is well known, was zealously attached to the Platonic system. When therefore he was publicly condemned, many, to avoid the imputation of his errors, adopted openly the philosophy of Aristotle. The Nestorian, Arian, and Eutychian controversies were managed, on both sides, by a perpetual recourse to subtil distinctions. And no philosophy was so proper to furnish such weapons, as that of Aristotle; for that of Plato was far from being adapted to form the mind to the Polemic arts.

C H A P. II.

Concerning the doctors and ministers of the Christian church, and its form of government.

I. SEVERAL causes contributed to bring about a change in the external form of ecclesiastical government. The power of the bishops, particularly those of the first order, was sometimes augmented, and sometimes diminished, and in all these changes the intrigues of the court and the political state of the empire had much more influence, than the rules of equity and wisdom.

But an affair of greater consequence drew now the general attention, and this was the vast augmentation of honours that was at this time accumulated upon the bishops of Constantinople, in opposition to the most vigorous efforts of the Roman pontiff. In the preceding century, the council of Constantinople had, on account of the dignity of that imperial city, conferred upon its bishops a place among the first rulers of the Christian church. This new dignity adding fuel to their ambition, they extended their views of authority and dominion, and encouraged, no doubt, by the consent of the emperor, reduced the provinces of Asia, Thrace, and Pontus under their jurisdiction. They now grasped at still further accessions of power; so that not only the whole eastern part of Illyricum was added to their former acquisitions, but they were also exalted to the highest summit of ecclesiastical authority. For, by the twenty eighth Canon of the council held at Chalcedon in the year 451, it was resolved, that the same rights and honours, which had been conferred upon the bishop of Rome,

Rome, were due to the bishop of Constantinople, on account of the equal dignity and lustre of the two cities, in which these prelates exercised their authority.

The same council confirmed also the bishop of Constantinople in the spiritual government of those provinces over which he had usurped the jurisdiction. Leo the Great, bishop of Rome, opposed, with vehemence, the passing of these decrees, and his opposition was seconded by that of several other prelates. But their efforts were vain, as the emperors supported the decisions of the Grecian bishops. In consequence of the decrees of this famous council, the bishop of Constantinople began to contend for the supremacy with the Roman pontiff, and to crush the bishops of Alexandria and Antioch, so as to make them feel the oppressive effects of his superiority. And none distinguished himself more in this matter, than Acacius, one of the bishops of the imperial city.

II. It was about this time that Juvenal, bishop of Jerusalem, attempted to withdraw from the jurisdiction of the bishop of Cæsarea, and aspired after a place among the first prelates of the Christian world. The high degree of esteem, in which the church of Jerusalem was held among all other Christian societies (on account of its rank among the apostolical churches, and its title to the appellation of *mother-church*), was favourable to the ambition of Juvenal, and rendered his project more practicable. Encouraged by this, and animated by the favour of Theodosius the younger, the aspiring prelate not only assumed the dignity of Patriarch of all Palestine, a rank that rendered him supreme and independent of all spiritual authority, but also invaded the

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the rights of the bishop of Antioch, and usurped his jurisdiction over the provinces of Phœnicia and Arabia. Hence arose a warm contest between Juvenal and Maximus bishop of Antioch, which the council of Chalcedon decided, by restoring to the latter the provinces of Phœnicia and Arabia, and confirming the former in the spiritual possession of all Palestine, and in the high rank which he had assumed in the church. By this means, there were created, in this century, five superior rulers of the church, who were distinguished from the rest, by the title of Patriarchs.

III. The patriarchs were distinguished by considerable privileges, that were annexed to their high station. They alone consecrated the bishops, who lived in the provinces that belonged to their jurisdiction. They assembled yearly in council the clergy of their respective districts, in order to regulate the affairs of the church. The cognizance of all important causes, and the determination of the more weighty controversies, were referred to the patriarch of the province where they arose. They also pronounced a decisive judgment in those cases, where accusations were brought against bishops. And, lastly, they appointed *vicars*, or deputies, clothed with their authority, for the preservation of order and tranquillity in the remoter provinces.

But the authority of the patriarchs was not acknowledged through all the provinces without exception. Several districts, both in the eastern and western empires, were exempted from their jurisdiction. The emperors, who reserved to themselves the *supreme* power in the Christian hierarchy, and received, with great readiness, the complaints of those who considered themselves as

injured by the patriarchs; the councils also, in which the majesty and legislative power of the church immediately resided; all these were so many obstacles to the arbitrary proceedings of the patriarchal order.

IV. This constitution of ecclesiastical government was so far from contributing to the peace of the Christian church, that it proved a perpetual source of dissensions, and was productive of various inconveniencies. The patriarchs, who by their exalted rank were equally able to do much good and much mischief, began to encroach upon the rights, and to trample upon the prerogatives of their bishops. And that they might invade, without opposition, the rights of the bishops, they permitted the bishops to trample upon the rights of the people. They fomented also divisions among the bishops, and between the bishops and the other ministers of the church; they went still further, and sowed the seeds of discord between the clergy and the people, that all these combustions might furnish them with perpetual matter for the exercise of their authority. They raised opposition against the bishops from every quarter; they engaged in their cause, by promises, and by liberality, whole swarms of monks who served as intestine enemies to the bishops, and as a dead weight on the side of patriarchal tyranny. These monastic hirelings contributed more than any thing else, to ruin the ancient discipline, to diminish the authority of the bishops, and raise, to an enormous height, the power of their ambitious patrons.

V. To these lamentable evils were added the quarrels and animosities that rose among the patriarchs themselves, and which produced the most bloody wars, and the most detestable crimes.

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The patriarch of Constantinople distinguished himself in these odious contests. Elated with the favour of the imperial court, he cast a haughty eye on all sides, where any objects were to be found, on which he might exercise his ambition. On the one hand, he reduced, under his jurisdiction, the patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch; and on the other, he invaded the diocese of the Roman pontiff, and spoiled him of several provinces. The two former prelates, though they struggled with vehemence, yet struggled ineffectually. But the Roman pontiff, far superior to them in wealth and power, contended with more vigour, and, in his turn, gave a deadly wound to the supremacy of the Byzantine patriarch.

The attentive inquirer will find, in the events now mentioned, the principal source of those deplorable dissensions, which divided, first, the eastern church into various sects, and afterwards separated it entirely from that of the west. He will find, that these flowed chiefly from the unchristian contentions for dominion, which reigned among those who set themselves up for the fathers of the church.

VI. None of the contending bishops found the times so favourable to his ambition, as the Roman pontiff. Notwithstanding the efforts of the bishop of Constantinople, a variety of circumstances united in augmenting his power, though he had not, as yet, assumed the dignity of supreme lawgiver and judge of the whole church. The bishops of Alexandria and Antioch, unable to make head against the prelate of Constantinople, fled often to the Roman pontiff for succour; and the inferior order of bishops used the same method, when their rights were in-

vaded by the prelates of Alexandria and Antioch. So that the bishop of Rome, by taking all these prelates alternately under his protection, daily added new authority to the Roman see, rendered it every where respected, and was thus imperceptibly establishing its supremacy. Such were the means by which the Roman pontiff extended his dominion in the east. In the west its increase was owing to other causes. The declining power and supine indolence of the emperors left the bishop, who presided in their imperial city, almost without controul. The incursions, moreover, of the Barbarians were so far from being prejudicial to his dominion, that they rather contributed to its advancement. For the kings, who penetrated into the empire, were only solicitous to give stability to their respective governments. And when they perceived the subjection of the multitude to the bishops, and the dependance of the bishops upon the Roman pontiff, they immediately resolved to reconcile him to their interests, by loading him with benefits and honours.

Among all the prelates who ruled the church of Rome during this century, there was none who asserted, with such vigour and success, the authority of the Roman pontiff, as Leo, commonly surnamed the Great. Yet neither he, nor the other promoters of that cause, were able to overcome all the obstacles that were laid in their way. Many examples might be alledged in proof of this, particularly the case of the Africans, whom no threats or promises could engage to submit the decision of their controversies, and the determination of their causes, to the Roman tribunal.

VII. The vices of the clergy were now carried to the most enormous lengths; and all the writers of this century are unanimous in their accounts of the luxury, arrogance, avarice, and voluptuousness of the sacerdotal orders. The *bishops*, and particularly those of the first rank, created various delegates, who managed for them the affairs of their dioceses; and a sort of courts were gradually formed, where these pompous ecclesiastics gave audience, and received the homage of a cringing multitude. The office of a *presbyter* was looked upon of such a high and eminent nature, that Martin, bishop of Tours, was so audacious as to maintain, at a public entertainment, that the emperor was inferior, in dignity, to one of that order. As to the *deacons*, their pride and licentiousness occasioned many and grievous complaints, as appears from the decrees of several councils.

These opprobrious stains, in the characters of the clergy, would never have been endured, had not the greatest part of mankind been sunk in superstition and ignorance. The barbarous nations also, who, after the defeat of the Romans, divided among them the western empire, bore, with the utmost patience, both the dominion and vices of the bishops and priests, because, upon their conversion to Christianity, they became naturally subject to their jurisdiction; and still more, because they looked upon the ministers of Christ, as invested with the same privileges, which distinguished the priests of their fictitious deities.

VIII. The corruption of that order, who were appointed to promote, by their doctrine and examples, the interest of virtue, will appear less surprizing when we consider, that multitudes

of people of all kinds were every where admitted, without examination and without choice, into the body of the clergy, the greatest part of whom had no other view, than the enjoyment of a lazy repose. Many of these were confined to no fixed places, had no employment of any kind, but sauntered about wherever they pleased, gaining their maintenance by imposing upon the ignorant multitude, and sometimes by mean and dishonest practices.

But if any should ask, how this is reconcileable with the number of saints, who are said to have shone forth in this century? The answer is obvious: these saints were canonized by the ignorance of the times. For, in an age of darkness and corruption, those, who distinguished themselves from the multitude either by their writings, or their eloquence, or by the ascendant they had gained over their passions; such were esteemed something more than men; they appeared to others as men divinely inspired, and full of the Deity.

IX. The monks, who had formerly lived in solitary retreats, and had never thought of any rank among the sacerdotal order, were now distinguished from the populace, and endowed with such opulence and such honourable privileges, that they found themselves in a condition to claim an eminent station among the pillars of the Christian community. The fame of their sanctity was so great, that bishops and presbyters were often chosen out of their order, and the passion of erecting edifices, in which the monks and holy virgins might serve God in the most commodious manner, was carried beyond all bounds.

The monastic orders did not all observe the same rule of discipline, nor the same manner of living. Some followed the rule of Augustine, others that of Basil, others that of Antony, others that of Athanasius, others that of Pachomius; but they must all have become extremely remiss in observing the laws of their respective orders, since the licentiousness of the monks, even in this century, was become a proverb, and they are said to have excited the most dreadful tumults and seditions in various places. All the Monastic orders were under the protection of the bishops in whose provinces they lived, nor did the patriarchs claim any authority over them.

X. Several writers of considerable merit adorned this century. Among the Greeks, the first place is due to Cyril, bishop of Alexandria, so famous for his learned productions; but infamous for his turbulent spirit, litigious and contentious temper.

After Cyril, we may place Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus, an eloquent, copious, and learned writer, eminent for his acquaintance with all the branches of sacred erudition, and for his recovery from the Nestorian errors.

Isidore of Pelusium, was a man of uncommon learning and sanctity. A great number of his epistles are yet extant, and discover more piety, genius, erudition, and wisdom, than are to be found in the voluminous productions of many other writers.

Theodore of Mopsuestia, was one of the most learned men of his time. Those who have read, with any attention, the fragments of his writings, which are to be found in Photius, will lament the want of these excellent compositions, which
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are either entirely lost, or, if any remain, are only extant in the Syriac language.

XI. A Roman pontiff, Leo I. surnamed the Great, shines forth at the head of the Latin writers of this century. He was a man of uncommon genius and eloquence, which he employed however too much in extending his authority; a point in which his ambition was both indefatigable and excessive.

Orosius acquired a considerable degree of reputation by the *History* he wrote to refute the cavils of the Pagans against Christianity, and by his books against the Pelagians and Priscillianists.

Cassian, a very pious man, inculcated in Gaul, both by his discourse and his writings, the discipline and manner of living which prevailed among the Syrian and Egyptian monks.

Maximus of Turin published several *Homilies*, which are yet extant; and, though short, are, for the most part, recommendable both for their elegance and piety.

Eucherius of Lyons, and bishop of that city, was one of the most considerable moral writers that flourished among the Latins in this century.

Salvian was an excellent writer. His most judicious declamations against the vices of the age, in his *Treatise against Avarice*, and his *Discourse concerning Providence*, are warm and vehement: and yet he was one of the most humane and benevolent men of his time. And it must be confessed, that his austerity, in point of discipline, was accompanied with the most amiable moderation towards those who differed from him in articles of faith.

C H A P. III.

Concerning the doctrine of the church during this century.

I. **M**ANY points of religion were more largely explained, and many of its doctrines determined with more accuracy than they had been in the preceding ages. This was owing to the controversies that were multiplied at this time throughout the Christian world, concerning the *innate corruption and depravity of man*; the *natural ability of men to live according to the dictates of the divine law*; the *necessity of the divine grace in order to salvation*; the *nature and existence of human liberty*; and other such intricate and perplexing questions. Hence arose new matter of animosity and dispute, of bigotry and uncharitableness, which flowed like a torrent through succeeding ages, and which all human efforts seem unable to vanquish.

II. If, before this time, the lustre of religion was clouded with superstition, and adulterated with human inventions, this evil, instead of diminishing, increased daily. The souls of departed Christians were invoked, and their aid implored by fervent prayers; while none stood up to censure or oppose this preposterous worship. The images of saints were now honoured with a particular worship in several places; and many imagined, that this worship drew down into the images the propitious presence of the saints they represented; deluded, perhaps, into this idle fancy by the fictions of the heathen priests, who had published the same thing concerning the statues of Jupiter and Mercury. A singular efficacy was

was also attributed to the bones of martyrs, and to the figure of the cross, in defeating the attempts of Satan, removing all sorts of calamities, and in healing the diseases both of the body and mind. We shall not enter here into a particular account of the public supplications, the holy pilgrimages, the multiplication of temples, altars, penitential garments, and a multitude of other circumstances, that shewed the decline of genuine piety. As there were none in these times to hinder the Christians from retaining the opinions of their Pagan ancestors concerning departed souls, heroes, temples, and such like matters, and transferring them into their religious services; and as, instead of entirely abolishing the institutions of ancient times, these institutions were still observed with only some slight alterations; all this swelled the torrent of superstition, and deformed the beauty of the Christian religion.

The famous Pagan doctrine, concerning the *purification of departed souls*, by means of a certain kind of *fire*, was more amply explained and confirmed now than it had formerly been. Every body knows, that this doctrine proved an inexhaustible source of riches to the clergy through the succeeding ages.

III. Theodoret and Theodore, bishops of Cyrus and Mopsuestia, the two most famous expositors of this age, illustrated a great part of the Holy Scriptures by their pious labours. They were truly eminent both in point of learning and genius; and, free and unprejudiced in their search after truth, they followed the explications of scripture given by their predecessors, only as far as they found them agreeable to reason.

IV. The doctrines of religion were, at this time, represented in a manner, that favoured little

tle of their native purity and simplicity. They were drawn out by laboured commentaries beyond the terms in which the divine wisdom had thought fit to reveal them; and were examined with that minuteness and subtilty that were only proper to cover them with obscurity. And, what was still worse, the theological notions that generally prevailed, were proved rather by the authorities and logical discussions of the ancient doctors, than by the unerring dictates of the divine word.

V. Of all the instances of superstitious frenzy that disgraced this age, none was held in higher veneration, than that of a certain order of men, who were called *Stilites* by the Greeks, and *Sancti Columnares*, or *Pillar-Saints*, by the Latins. These were persons of a most singular turn of mind, who stood motionless upon the tops of *pillars*, expressly raised for this exercise of their patience, and remained there for several years. The inventor of this strange discipline was *Siméon*, a Syrian, who began his follies by changing the employment of a shepherd, for the senseless austerities of the monkish life. But his enthusiasm carried him still greater lengths; for, in order to climb as near heaven as he could, he passed thirty-seven years of his life upon five pillars of six, twelve, twenty-two, thirty-six, and forty cubits high, and attracted the veneration of all about him. Many of the inhabitants of Syria and Palestine followed his example, though not with the same degree of austerity. And, what is almost incredible, this superstitious practice continued in vogue until the twelfth century, when it was, at length, totally suppressed.

The Latins had too much prudence to imitate the Orientals in this whimsical superstition. And
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when a certain fanatic, named Wulfilaicus, erected one of these pillars in the county of Treves, and proposed living upon it after the manner of Simeon; the neighbouring bishops ordered it to be pulled down, and thus nipped the superstition in the bud.

VI. A small number of ecclesiastics boldly attempted to pluck up the roots of growing superstition, and to bring back the deluded multitude to the practice of solid and genuine piety. But the votaries of superstition, who were superior in number, reputation, and authority, rendered their efforts utterly ineffectual. We have an example of this in the case of Vigilantius, a man remarkable for his learning and eloquence, who was born in Gaul, and went from thence to Spain, where he performed the functions of a presbyter. On his return from a voyage he had made into Palestine and Egypt, he began, about the beginning of this century, to publish repeated exhortations opposite to the opinions and manners of the times. Among other things, he denied that the tombs and the bones of the martyrs were to be honoured with any sort of worship; and therefore censured the pilgrimages, that were made to places, that were reputed holy. He turned into derision the prodigies which were said to be wrought in the temples consecrated to martyrs. He asserted, that the custom of burning tapers at the tombs of the martyrs in broad day, was borrowed from the ancient superstition of the Pagans. He maintained, moreover, that prayers addressed to departed saints were void of all efficacy; and treated with contempt the celibacy of the clergy, and the various austerities of the monastic life. And, finally, he affirmed, that the conduct of those who sub-

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mitted to a voluntary poverty, or sent a part of their treasures to Jerusalem for devout purposes, had nothing in it acceptable to the Deity.

There were among the Gallic and Spanish bishops several that relished the opinions of Vigilantius. But Jerome, the great monk of the age, assailed this bold reformer with such bitterness and fury, that the honest presbyter soon found that nothing but his silence could preserve his life. This project then of reforming the corruptions, which superstitious zeal had introduced into the church, was choked in its birth. And the name of good Vigilantius remains still in the *list of heretics*.

VII. The controversies, which had been raised in Egypt, concerning Origen and his doctrine, towards the conclusion of the preceding century, were now renewed at Constantinople, and carried on without either decency or prudence. The Nitrian monks, banished from Egypt, on account of their attachment to Origen, took refuge at Constantinople, and were treated, by John Chrysostom, the bishop of that city, with clemency and benignity. This no sooner came to the knowledge of Theophilus, patriarch of Alexandria, than he formed a project against the eloquent prelate; and sent the famous Epiphanius, with several other bishops, to Constantinople, to accuse and deprive him of his episcopal dignity. No time could be more favourable; for Chrysostom, by his austerity, and his vehement declamations against the vices of the people and the corrupt manners of the ladies of the court, had incurred the displeasure of many, and had excited, in a particular manner, the resentment of the empress Eudoxia, wife of Arcadius. This princess sent for Theophilus and the Egyptian bishops,

who, pursuant to her orders, repaired to Constantinople; and, having called a council, inquired into the religious sentiments of Chrysostom, and the whole course of his conduct and conversation. This council, which was held in the suburbs of Chalcedon, in the year 403, with Theophilus at its head, declared Chrysostom unworthy of his high rank in the church, and, in consequence of this decree, condemned him to banishment. The emperor confirmed the decree, by banishing him to Bithynia; but a violent earthquake and a terrible shower of hail, which were looked upon by the multitude as judgments occasioned by the unrighteous persecution of their pious bishop, alarmed the court, and engaged them to recal him. Yet the same unrelenting judges renewed their sentence, the year following; and he was banished to Cucusus, a city of Cilicia, where he died about three years after.

The exile of this illustrious man was followed by a terrible sedition of the Johannists, (so his votaries were called,) which was calmed, though with much difficulty, by the edicts of Arcadius. It is beyond all doubt, that the proceedings against Chrysostom were unjust; in this however he was to blame, that he assumed the authority which had been granted, by the council of Constantinople, to the bishops of that imperial city, and set himself up as a judge of the controversy between Theophilus and the Egyptian monks, which the Alexandrian prelate could not behold without resentment. These monks, when they lost their protector, were restored to the favour of Theophilus; but the faction of the Origenists continued, notwithstanding all this, to flourish in Egypt, Syria, and the adjacent countries, and held their chief residence at Jerusalem.

C H A P. IV.

Concerning the rites and ceremonies used in the church during this century.

I. **T**O enumerate the rites and institutions that were added, in this century, to the Christian worship, would require a volume. The *acts of councils*, and the records left us by the ancient writers, are the sources from whence we may draw a particular account of them. Several of these ancient writers have ingenuously acknowledged that true piety was smothered, by that enormous burthen of ceremonies under which it lay groaning in this century. This evil was owing partly to the ignorance of the clergy; partly to the calamities of the times, which were extremely unfavourable to the pursuit of knowledge; and partly to the natural depravity of imperfect mortals, who are much more disposed to worship with the eye than with the heart, and are more ready to offer to the Deity the pomp of outward service, than the nobler oblation of holy affections.

II. Divine worship was now daily rising from one degree of pomp to another, and degenerating more and more into a gaudy spectacle only proper to attract the stupid admiration of a gazing populace. The sacerdotal garments were embellished with a variety of ornaments, to excite in the minds of the multitude a greater veneration for the sacred order. New acts of devotion were also celebrated. In Gaul, particularly, the solemn *prayers and supplications*, which usually precede the anniversary of Christ's ascension, were instituted for the first time. In other places, perpetual acclamations of praise to God were per-

formed both night and day by singers, who succeeded each other, so as that the service suffered no interruption. The riches and magnificence of the churches exceeded all bounds. They were also adorned with costly images, among which, that of the Virgin Mary, holding the child Jesus in her arms, obtained the principal place. The altars and the chests, in which the relics were preserved, were in most places made of solid silver. And from this we may easily imagine the expences that were lavished upon the other utensils which were employed in the service of the church.

III. On the other hand, the *agapa*, or *feasts of charity*, were suppressed, on account of the abuses to which they gave occasion, amidst the decline of that piety which rendered them useful.

A new method also of proceeding with *penitents* was introduced into the Latin church. For grievous offenders, who had formerly been obliged to confess their guilt in the face of the congregation, were now delivered from this mortifying penalty, and obtained, from Leo the Great, a permission to *confess* their crimes *privately* to a priest appointed for that purpose. By this change, one of the greatest restraints upon licentiousness, and the only remaining barrier of chastity, were entirely removed, and the actions of Christians were subject to no other scrutiny than that of the clergy: a change, which was frequently convenient for the sinner, and also advantageous in many respects to the sacred order.

C H A P. V.

Concerning the dissensions and heresies that troubled the church during this century.

I. SEVERAL of those sects, which had divided the church in the preceding ages, renewed their efforts to propagate their respective opinions. We shall say nothing of the Novatians, Marcionites, and Manicheans, though their sects subsisted, and were numerous in many places. We shall confine ourselves to an account of the Donatists and Arians, who were the pests of the preceding century.

The Donatists had hitherto maintained themselves with a successful obstinacy, and their affairs were in a good state. But, about the beginning of this century, the face of things changed by the means of St. Augustin, bishop of Hippo. The Catholic bishops of Africa, animated by the exhortations of this zealous prelate, exerted themselves with the utmost vigour in the destruction of this sect. Accordingly deputies were sent, in the year 404, from the council of Carthage, to the emperor Honorius, to request, that the laws enacted against heretics, by the preceding emperors, might have force against the Donatists; and also to desire, that bounds might be set to the barbarous fury of the Circumcelliones. The first step that the emperor took, was to impose a fine upon all the Donatists, who refused to return into the bosom of the church, and to send their bishops and doctors into banishment. The year following, new laws, much severer than the former, were enacted against them, under the title of *Acts of Uniformity*. And as the magistrates were remiss in the execution of them, the coun-

cil of Carthage, in the year 407, sent a second time deputies to the emperor, to desire that certain persons might be appointed to execute these *edicts* with vigour; and their request was granted.

II. The faction of the Donatists, though much broke by these repeated shocks, was yet far from being extinguished. It recovered a part of its strength in the year 408, after Stilicho had been put to death by the order of Honorius, and gained a still further accession of vigour the year following, in which the emperor published a law in favour of liberty of conscience, and prohibited all compulsion in matters of religion. This law, however, was not of long duration. It was abrogated at the earnest solicitations of the council, which was held at Carthage in the year 410; and Marcellinus, the tribune, was sent by Honorius into Africa, with full power to bring to a conclusion this tedious contest. Marcellinus therefore held at Carthage, in the year 411, a solemn *meeting*, in which he examined the cause with much attention, heard the contending parties during the space of three days, and, at length, pronounced sentence in favour of the Catholics. There was no dispute carried on at this meeting between the Catholics and the Donatists; nor did any of the parties endeavour to gain or defeat the other by argument. This conference then was properly a *judicial trial*, in which Marcellinus was, by the emperor, appointed judge, or arbiter, of this religious controversy, and accordingly pronounced sentence after a proper hearing of the cause. It appears therefore from this event, that the notion of a supreme spiritual judge of controversy and ruler of the church, appointed by Christ, had not as yet entered into any one's head; since we see the African bishops themselves

themselves appealing to the emperor in the present religious question. The Catholic bishops, who were present at this conference, were 286 in number; and those of the Donatists 279. The latter, upon their defeat, appealed to the emperor, but without effect. The glory of their defeat was due to Augustin, who bore the principal part in this controversy, and who, indeed, by his writings, counsels, and admonitions, governed almost the whole African church.

III. By this, the party of the Donatists was greatly weakened: nor could they ever get the better of this terrible shock, though the face of affairs changed afterwards in a manner that was proper to revive their hopes. The greatest part of them, through the fear of punishment, returned into the bosom of the church; while the severest penalties were inflicted upon those who remained obstinate. Fines, banishment, confiscation of goods, were the ordinary punishments of the obstinate Donatists; and even the pain of death was inflicted upon such as surpassed the rest in perverseness.

IV. The Arians, oppressed by the imperial edicts, took refuge among those fierce and savage nations, who were gradually overturning the western empire, and found among the Goths, Suevi, Heruli, Vandals, and Burgundians, a peaceful retreat. And they treated the Catholics with the same violence which the latter had employed against them; they persecuted and vexed in various ways such as professed their adherence to the Nicene doctrines. The Vandals, in Africa, surpassed all the other savage nations in barbarity towards the Catholics. The kings of this fierce people, particularly Genseric and Huneric his son, pulled down the churches of those

those Christians who acknowledged the divinity of Christ, sent their bishops into exile, and maimed and tormented in various ways such as were nobly firm and inflexible. And they declared, that, in using these violent methods, they were authorized by the example of the emperors, who had enacted laws of the same nature against the Donatists, the Arians, and other sects who differed in opinion from the Christians of Constantinople.

We must not here omit mentioning the stupendous miracle, which is said to have been wrought during these persecutions in Africa, and by which the supreme Being is supposed to have declared his displeasure against the Arians, and his favour towards their adversaries. This miracle consisted in enabling those Catholics, whose tongues had been cut out by the Arian tyrant Huneric, to speak distinctly, and to proclaim aloud the divine majesty of the Saviour of the world. This remarkable fact can scarcely be denied, since it is supported by the testimony of the most credible and respectable witnesses: these witnesses, who had themselves ocular demonstration of the fact, were Victor of Utica, Æneas of Gaza, (who examined the mouths of the persons in question, and found that their tongues were entirely rooted out) Procopius, Marcellinus the count, and the emperor Justinian.

V. A new sect, which was the source of deplorable divisions in the church, was formed by Nestorius, a Syrian, bishop of Constantinople, a disciple of the celebrated Theodore of Mopsestia, and a man remarkable for his learning and eloquence. Though, by the decrees of former councils, it had been peremptorily determined that Christ was true God and true man; yet no
council

council had hitherto decreed any thing concerning the *manner* of this union of the two natures; nor was this matter, as yet, become a subject either of inquiry or dispute among Christians. The consequence of this was, that the Christian doctors expressed themselves differently concerning this mystery.

But Apollinaris maintained that the man Christ was not endowed with a human soul, but with the divine nature, which was substituted in its place, and performed its functions; and this doctrine manifestly supposed a *confusion* of the two natures in the Messiah. The Syrian doctors therefore, that they might avoid the errors of Apollinaris, were careful in establishing an accurate distinction between the divine and the human nature in the Son of God; and for this purpose used such forms of expression as seemed to favour the notion of Christ's being composed of two distinct persons. The manner of speaking, adopted by the Alexandrians and Egyptians, had a different tendency, and seemed to countenance the doctrine of Apollinaris, and by a *confusion* of the *two natures* to blend them into *one*. Nestorius, who was a Syrian, and had adopted the sentiments of the doctors of his nation, was a violent enemy to all the sects; but to none so much as to the Apollinarian faction, after whose ruin he breathed with an ardent zeal. He therefore discoursed concerning the two natures in Christ after the Syrian manner, and commanded his disciples to distinguish carefully between the *actions* and *perceptions* of the Son of God, and those of the son of man.

VI. The occasion of this controversy was furnished by the presbyter Anastasius, a friend of Nestorius.

Nestorius. This presbyter, in a public discourse delivered A. D. 428, declaimed warmly against the title of Θεοτόκος, or *mother of God*, which was now more frequently attributed to the Virgin Mary in the controversy against the Arians, than it had formerly been, and was a favourite term with the followers of Apollinaris. He, at the same time, gave it as his opinion, that the Holy Virgin was rather to be called Χριστοτόκος, i. e. *mother of Christ*, since the Deity can neither be born nor die, and of consequence the son of man alone could derive his birth from an earthly parent. Nestorius applauded these sentiments, and defended them in several discourses. But both he and his friend Anastasius were keenly opposed by certain monks at Constantinople, who maintained that the son of Mary was *God incarnate*, and excited the fury of the populace against Nestorius. Notwithstanding all this, the discourses of the latter had the majority on their side. The Egyptian monks had no sooner persecuted them, than they were persuaded, by the weight of the arguments they contained, to embrace the opinions of Nestorius, and accordingly ceased to call the Blessed Virgin the *mother of God*.

VII. The Prelate, who ruled the see of Alexandria at this time, was Cyril, a man of a haughty, turbulent, and imperious temper, and painfully jealous of the rising authority of the bishop of Constantinople. As soon as this controversy came to his knowledge, he censured the Egyptian monks and Nestorius; and, finding the latter little disposed to submit to his censure, he proceeded to violent measures, took counsel with Celestine, bishop of Rome, assembled a council at Alexandria, A. D. 430, and hurled

no less than twelve anathemas at the head of Nestorius. The thunderstruck prelate did not sink under this violent shock; but seeing himself unjustly accused of derogating from the majesty of Christ, he retorted the same accusation upon his adversary, charged him with the Apollinarian heresy, with confounding the two natures in Christ, and loaded Cyril with as many anathemas as he had received from him.

VIII. When the spirits were so exasperated on both sides, that there was no prospect of an amicable issue, Theodosius the younger called a council at Ephesus, A. D. 431, which was the *third general council* in the annals of the church. In this council Cyril presided, though he was the party concerned, and the avowed enemy of Nestorius; and he proposed examining and determining the matter in debate before John of Antioch and the other eastern bishops arrived. Nestorius objected against this proceeding, as irregular and unjust; but, his remonstrances being without effect, he refused to comply with the summons which called him to appear before the council. Cyril, pushing on matters with a lawless violence, Nestorius was judged without being heard; and, during the absence of a great number of those bishops who belonged to the council, he was compared with the traitor Judas, charged with blasphemy against the divine majesty, deprived of his episcopal dignity, and sent into exile, where he finished his days. The transactions of this council will appear to the candid reader in the most unfavourable light, as full of low artifice, contrary to all the rules of justice, and even destitute of the least air of common decency. The doctrine, however, that was established in it concerning Christ, was that
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which has been always acknowledged by the majority of Christians, viz. "That Christ was one divine person, in whom two natures were closely united, but without being mixed or confounded together."

IX. The greatest part of writers both ancient and modern, after a thorough examination of this matter, have concluded that the opinions of Nestorius, and of the council which condemned them, were the same in effect; that their difference was in words only, and that the whole blame of this unhappy controversy was to be charged upon the turbulent spirit of Cyril.

X. The council of Ephesus, instead of healing these divisions, did but inflame them more and more, and almost destroyed all hope of restoring concord and tranquillity in the church. John of Antioch, and the other eastern bishops, for whose arrival Cyril had refused to wait, met at Ephesus, and pronounced against him and Memnon, the bishop of that city, as severe a sentence as they had thundered against Nestorius. Hence arose a new dissension between Cyril and the Orientals, with John the bishop of Antioch at their head. This flame was indeed somewhat abated, A. D. 433, after Cyril had received the *articles of faith* drawn up by John, and abandoned certain expressions, of which the litigious might make a pernicious use. But the commotions, which arose from this fatal controversy, were more durable in the east. Nothing could oppose the progress of Nestorianism in those parts. The friends of the persecuted prelate carried his doctrine through all the Oriental provinces, and erected every where congregations which professed an invincible opposition to the decrees of the council of Ephesus. The
Persians,

Persians, among others, opposed Cyril in the most vigorous manner, maintained that Nestorius had been unjustly condemned, and charged Cyril with removing that distinction which subsists between the *two natures* in Christ. But nothing tended so much to propagate the doctrine of Nestorius, as its being received in the famous school at Edessa. For the doctors of this renowned academy not only instructed the youth in the Nestorian tenets, but translated from the Greek into the Syriac language the books of Nestorius, and spread them abroad throughout Assyria and Persia.

XI. A violent aversion to the Nestorian errors led many into the opposite extreme. This was the case with the famous Eutyches, abbot of a convent at Constantinople, and founder of a sect, which was in direct opposition to that of Nestorius, yet equally prejudicial to the church, by the discords and animosities it produced. The opinions of this new faction shot like lightning through the east; and it acquired such strength in its progress, as to create much uneasiness both to the Greeks and Nestorians. Eutyches began these troubles A. D. 448, when he was far advanced in years; and to exert his utmost force in opposing the Nestorian doctrine, he taught, that *in Christ there was but one nature, viz. that of the incarnate word*. Hence he was thought to deny the existence of the human nature in Christ, and was accused of this in the council that was assembled by Flavianus at Constantinople. By a decree of this council, he was ordered to renounce his opinion, which he obstinately refused to do, and was, on this account, excommunicated and deposed; but he appealed to the decision of a general council.

XII. In consequence of this appeal, the emperor Theodosius assembled an *œcumenical council* at Ephesus, A. D. 449, at the head of which he placed Dioscorus, bishop of Alexandria, the successor of Cyril, the faithful imitator of his arrogance and fury, and a declared enemy to the bishop of Constantinople. Accordingly, by the caballing of this turbulent man, matters were carried on in this council with the same want of equity and decency that had dishonoured a former Ephesian council. For Dioscorus confounded matters with such dexterity, that the doctrine of *one incarnate nature* triumphed, and Eutyches was acquitted of the charge of error that had been brought against him. Flavianus, on the other hand, was, by the order of this unrighteous council, publicly scourged in the most barbarous manner, and banished to Epipas, a city of Lydia, where soon after he ended his days. But though Flavianus died soon after the council of Ephesus, of the bruises he had received from Dioscorus, and the other bishops of his party in that horrid assembly, yet, before his death, he had appealed to Leo; and this appeal, pursued by Leo, occasioned the council, in which Eutyches was condemned, and the bloody Dioscorus deposed. The Greeks called this Ephesian council, an *assembly of robbers*, *συνόδον ληστερικὴν*, because every thing was carried in it by fraud or violence. And many councils, indeed, both in this and the following ages, are equally intitled to the same appellation.

XIII. But the face of affairs soon changed; Flavianus and his followers not only engaged Leo the great, bishop of Rome, in their interests (for the Roman pontiff was the ordinary refuge of the oppressed and conquered party in this century)

century) but also remonstrated to the emperor, that a matter of such an important nature required a council composed out of the church universal. Leo seconded this request, and demanded of Theodosius a general council, which no entreaties could persuade him to grant. Upon his death, however, his successor Marcian consented to Leo's demand, and called, in the year 451, the council of Chalcedon, which is reckoned the *fourth general or œcumenical council*. The legates of Leo presided in this grand and crowded assembly. Dioscorus was condemned, deposed, and banished into Paphlagonia; the acts of the council of Ephesus were annulled; Eutyches, who had been already sent into banishment, and deprived of his Sacerdotal dignity by the emperor, was now condemned, though absent; and the following doctrine, which is at this time generally received, was inculcated upon Christians as the object of faith, *viz.* "That in Christ *two distinct natures* were united in *one person*, and that without any change, mixture, or confusion."

XIV. The remedy applied by this council, to heal a divided church, proved really worse than the disease. For a great number of Oriental and Egyptian doctors, though of different opinions in other respects, united in opposing the council of Chalcedon, and were unanimous in maintaining an *unity of nature*, as well as of *person*, in Jesus Christ. Hence arose deplorable discords, whose fury and barbarity were carried to the most excessive lengths. Upon the death of the emperor Marcian, the populace assembled tumultuously in Egypt, massacred Proterius, the successor of Dioscorus, and substituted in his place Timotheus Ælurus, a zealous defender of the Eutychian doctrine. This latter was deposed and ba-

nished by the emperor Leo; but, upon his death, was restored by Basiliscus both to his liberty and episcopal dignity. After the death of Ælurus, the defenders of the council of Chalcedon chose in his place Timotheus, while the partisans of the Eutychian doctrine of the *one nature* elected Peter Moggus to the same dignity. An edict of the emperor Zeno obliged the latter to yield. The triumph, however, of the Chalcedonians, on this occasion, was but transitory; for, upon the death of Timotheus, John Talaia, whom they had chosen in his place, was removed by the same emperor; and Moggus, or Mongus, by an imperial edict, was, in the year 482, raised to the see of Alexandria.

XV. To put an end to this controversy, the emperor Zeno published, A. D. 482, the famous *Henoticon*, or *Decree of union*. This decree repeated and confirmed all that had been enacted in the councils of Nice, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon, against the Arians, Nestorians, and Eutychians, without making any particular mention of the council of Chalcedon. For the emperor was persuaded that the present opposition was not against the decrees that had passed in the council of Chalcedon, but against the council itself; with respect to which therefore an entire silence was, undoubtedly, prudent in a proposal, which, instead of reviving, was designed to put an end to all disputes.

XVI. But the Roman pontiff, Felix II, having assembled an Italian council, composed of sixty-seven bishops, condemned, deposed, and cut off from the communion of the church, Acacius bishop of Constantinople, as a perfidious enemy to the truth. Several articles were alleged against Acacius, to furnish a pretext for the severity of this

this sentence; but the true reasons of these proceedings, and of the irreconcilable hatred which the Roman pontiffs indulged against Acacius, were his denying the supremacy of the bishop of Rome and opposing it throughout the whole course of his ministry. This is one of the periods of ecclesiastical history, in which we find a multitude of events, which are so many proofs how far the supremacy of the bishop of Rome was from being universally acknowledged. Pope Felix II, deposes and excommunicates Acacius the patriarch of Constantinople, who not only receives this sentence with contempt, but, in his turn, anathematizes and excommunicates the pope. This conduct of Acacius is approved by the emperor, the church of Constantinople, by almost all the eastern bishops, nay, by even Andreas of Thessalonica, who was at that time the pope's vicar for East Illyricum. This was the occasion of that general schism, which continued for the space of twenty-five years, between the eastern and western churches. It is here worthy of observation, that the eastern bishops did not adhere to the cause of Acacius from any other principle, than a persuasion of the illegality of his excommunication by the Roman pontiff, who, in their judgment, had not a right to depose the first bishop of the east, without the consent of a general council.

XVII. A new controversy arose in the church during this century, and its effects extended themselves through the following ages. The authors of it were Pelagius and Cælestius, both monks; the former a Briton; and the latter a native of Ireland: they lived at Rome in the greatest reputation, and were universally esteemed on account of their extraordinary piety. Indeed

the furious Jerom, who never once thought of doing common justice to those who had the misfortune to differ from him in opinion, accused Pelagius of gluttony and intemperance, after he had heard of his errors, though he had admired him before for his exemplary virtue. Augustin, more candid and honest, bears impartial testimony to the truth; and even while he writes against him, acknowledges that he had made great progress in virtue and piety, that his life was chaste and his manners blameless. These monks looked upon the doctrines, which were commonly received, "*Concerning the original corruption of human nature, as prejudicial to the progress of holiness, and tending to lull mankind in a presumptuous security. They maintained that the sin of our first parents was imputed to them alone, and not to their posterity; that mankind, therefore, are capable of repentance and amendment, and of arriving to the highest degrees of piety by the use of their natural faculties.*" These notions were propagated at Rome, though in a private manner, by the two monks, who, retiring from that city, A. D. 410, upon the approach of the Goths, went first into Sicily, and afterwards into Africa, where they published their doctrine with more freedom. From Africa Pelagius passed into Palestine, while Cælestius remained at Carthage, desiring to be admitted among the presbyters of that city. But the discovery of his opinions having blasted his hopes, and his errors being condemned in a council held at Carthage A. D. 412, he departed from that city, and went into the east. It was from this time that Augustin, the famous bishop of Hippo, began to attack the tenets of Pelagius and Cælestius in his

his writings; and to him is principally due the glory of having suppressed this sect in its very birth.

XVIII. Things went more smoothly with Pelagius in the east, where he enjoyed the favour of John, bishop of Jerusalem. Under this powerful protection, Pelagius made a public profession of his opinions, and formed disciples in several places. And though, in the year 415, he was accused by Orosius, a Spanish presbyter, whom Augustin had sent into Palestine for that purpose, before an assembly of bishops met at Jerusalem, yet he was dismissed without the least censure; and not only so, but was soon after fully acquitted of all errors by the council of Diospolis.

But afterwards this controversy was brought to Rome, and referred by Cælestius and Pelagius to the decision of Zosimus, who was raised to the pontificate A. D. 417. The new pontiff, gained over by the seemingly orthodox *confession of faith*, that Cælestius, who was now at Rome, had drawn up, and by the letters of Pelagius, pronounced in favour of these monks, and declared them sound in the faith, and unjustly persecuted by their adversaries. The African bishops, with Augustin at their head, continued obstinately to maintain the judgment they had pronounced, and to strengthen it by their exhortations, their letters, and their writings. Zosimus yielded to the perseverance of the Africans, changed his mind, and condemned Pelagius and Cælestius, whom he had honoured with his approbation, and covered with his protection. This was followed by a train of evils, which pursued these two monks without interruption. They were condemned by that same Ephesian council which had

had launched its thunder at the head of Nestorius: in short, the Gauls, Britons, and Africans, by their councils, and the emperors, by their edicts and penal laws, demolished this sect in its infancy, and suppressed it entirely.*

XIX. The disputes about the opinions of Pelagius occasioned, as usually happens, other controversies equally prejudicial to the peace of the church. In the course of this dispute, Augustin had delivered his opinion, *Concerning the necessity of divine grace in order to our salvation, and the decrees of God with respect to the future conditions of men*, without being always consistent with himself. Hence certain monks of Adrumetum, and others, were led into a notion, "That God not only predestinated the wicked to eternal punishment, but also to the transgression for which they are punished; and that thus both the good and bad actions of all men were determined from eternity by a divine decree, and fixed by an invincible necessity." Those, who embraced this opinion, were called Predestinarians. Augustin used his utmost influence to prevent the spreading of this doctrine, and explained his true sentiments with more perspicuity, that it might not be attributed to him. And his efforts were seconded by the councils of Arles and Lions, in which the doctrine in question was publicly rejected and condemned.

* It is scarce possible at this distance of time to know, what Pelagius really held. All his writings are destroyed: and we have account of them but from Augustin, his furious, implacable enemy. I doubt whether he was any more an Heretic than Castellio, or Arminius.

THE
SIXTH CENTURY.
PART I.

The EXTERNAL HISTORY of the CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

*Concerning the prosperous events which happened
to the church during this century.*

I. **T**HE zeal of the bishops of Constantinople, seconded by the influence of the Grecian emperors, increased the number of Christians in the east, and contributed to the conversion of some barbarous nations, of those, particularly, who lived upon the borders of the Euxine sea. Among these nations were the Abasgi, who inhabited the country lying between the coasts of the Euxine sea, and mount Caucasus, and who embraced Christianity under the reign of Justinian; the Heruli, who dwelt beyond the Danube, and were converted under the same reign; as also the Alans, Lazi, and Zani, with other uncivilized countries, whose situation, at this time, is only known by conjecture. These conversions, indeed, however pompously they may

may found, were extremely superficial and imperfect. All that was required of these darkened nations amounted to an oral profession of their faith in Christ, to their abstaining from sacrificing to the gods, and their committing to memory certain forms of doctrine; while little care was taken to enrich their minds with pious sentiments, or to cultivate in their hearts virtuous affections. So that, even after their conversion to Christianity, they retained their primitive ferocity and savage manners, and continued to distinguish themselves by the most horrid acts of cruelty and rapine, and the practice of all sorts of wickedness. In the greatest part of the Grecian provinces, and even in the capital of the eastern empire, there were still multitudes who preserved a secret attachment to the Pagan religion. Of these vast numbers were brought over to Christianity, under the reign of Justin, by the labours of John, bishop of Asia.

II. In the western parts, Remigius, bishop of Rheims, who is commonly called *The apostle of the Gauls*, signalized his zeal in the conversion of those who still adhered to the ancient superstitions; and his success was considerable, particularly after that auspicious period, when Clovis, king of the Franks, embraced the gospel.

In Britain, several circumstances concurred to favour the propagation of Christianity. Ethelbert, king of Kent, and the most considerable of the Anglo-Saxon monarchs, among whom that island was at this time divided, married Bertha, daughter of Cherebert, king of Paris, towards the conclusion of this century. This princess, partly by her own influence, and partly by the pious efforts of the clergy, who followed her into Britain, gradually formed, in the mind of Ethelbert,

bert, an inclination to the Christian religion. While the king was in this favourable disposition, Gregory the Great sent into Britain, A. D. 596, forty Benedictin monks, with Augustin at their head, in order to bring to perfection what the queen had begun. This monk, seconded by the zeal and assistance of Bertha, converted the king, and the greatest part of the inhabitants of Kent. This British apostle was prior of the monastery of St. Andrew, of the order of St. Benedict, at Rome. After his arrival in England, he converted the heathen temples into places of Christian worship, erected Christ-church into a cathedral, opened a seminary of learning, founded the abbey of St. Augustin, received episcopal ordination from the primate of Arles, was invested, by pope Gregory, with power over all the British bishops and Saxon prelates, and was the first archbishop of Canterbury.

The labours of Columbas, an Irish monk, were attended with success amongst the Picts and Scots, many of whom embraced the gospel of Christ.

In Germany, the Bohemians, Thuringians, and Boii, are said to have abandoned their ancient superstitions, and to have received the light of divine truth; though this fact appears doubtful.

All these conversions will lose much of their importance in the esteem of such, as examine with attention the accounts which have been given of them by the writers of this and the succeeding ages. For by these accounts it appears, that the converted nations retained a great part of their former impiety, superstition, and licentiousness; and that, attached to Christ by a mere outward profession, they, in effect, renounced

nounced the purity of his doctrine, and the authority of his gospel, by their flagitious lives, and their superstitious and idolatrous rites which they continued to observe.

III. A vast multitude of Jews, converted to Christianity in several places, were added to the church during this century. Many in the east, particularly the inhabitants of Borium, a city of Libya, were brought over to the truth by the persuasion and influence of the emperor Justinian. In the west, the zeal and authority of the Gallic and Spanish monarchs, the efforts of Gregory the Great, and the labours of Avitus bishop of Vienne, engaged numbers of them to receive the gospel. But in truth most of these conversions were owing to the liberality of Christian princes, or to the fear of punishment, rather than to the love of truth. In Gaul, the Jews were compelled, by Childeric, to receive the ordinance of baptism; and the same method of converting was practised in Spain. This method, however, was entirely disapproved by Gregory the Great, who, though extremely severe upon the heretics, would suffer no violence to be offered to the Jews.

IV. If we consider the wretched manner in which many of these Christian missionaries converted the heathens, we shall perceive that they wanted not many arguments to enforce the doctrines they taught, and the discipline they recommended; for they required nothing of these people that was difficult to be performed, or that laid any restraint upon their appetites and passions. The principal injunctions they imposed upon these proselytes were, that they should get by heart certain summaries of doctrine, and pay to the images of Christ

Christ and the saints the same religious services which they had formerly offered to the statues of the gods.

CHAPTER II.

Concerning the calamitous events which happened to the church during this century.

I. **T**HOUGH the abjuration of Paganism was, by the imperial laws, made a necessary step to preferment, yet several persons, reputed for their erudition and gravity of manners, persisted in their adherence to the ancient superstition. Tribonian, the famous compiler of the Roman law, is thought, by some, to have been among this number; and such also, in the opinion of many, was the case of Procopius the celebrated historian. It is certain, that Agathias, an eminent lawyer at Smyrna, persevered in his attachment to the Pagan worship. These illustrious Gentiles were exempted from the severities which were employed frequently to engage the lower orders to abandon the service of the gods. The rigour of the laws fell only upon those who had neither rank, fortune, nor court-favour to ward off their execution.

II. Surprized as we may be at the protection granted to the persons now mentioned, when the gospel was, in many instances, propagated by unchristian methods; it will appear still more astonishing, that the Platonic philosophers should be permitted, to teach publicly tenets absolutely incompatible with the doctrines of the gospel. These doctors indeed affected, generally speaking, a high degree of moderation, and modified their

expressions in such a manner, as to give to the Pagan system an evangelical aspect. Some of them however carried their audacious efforts against Christianity so far as to revile it publicly. Damascius, in the life of Isodorus, casts upon the Christians the most ignominious aspersions; Simplicius, in his illustrations of the Aristotelian philosophy, throws out several malignant insinuations against the gospel; and the *Epicheiremata* of Proclus, written expressly against the disciples of Jesus, were universally read. All this shews, that many of the magistrates, who were witnesses of these attempts, were not so much Christians in reality, as in appearance; otherwise, they would not have permitted the slanders of these licentious revilers to pass without restraint.

III. Notwithstanding the extensive progress of the gospel, the Christians, even in this century, suffered grievously in several places. In Britain, the Anglo-Saxons, who were masters of that kingdom, involved a multitude of its ancient inhabitants, who professed Christianity, in the deepest distresses, and tormented them with all that variety of suffering, which the spirit of persecution could invent. The Huns, in their irruption into Thrace, Greece, and the other provinces, during the reign of Justinian, treated the Christians with great barbarity; not so much, perhaps, from an aversion to Christianity, as from an hostile spirit of hatred against the Greeks, and a desire of overturning their empire. The face of affairs was totally changed in Italy, about the middle of this century; by a grand revolution which happened under the reign of Justinian I. This emperor, by the arms of Narses, overturned the kingdom of the Ostrogoths, which had subsisted

sisted ninety years; and subdued all Italy under his dominion. But the state of things which this revolution introduced, was not of long duration; for the Lombards, a fierce and warlike people, headed by Alboinus their king, and joined by several other German nations, issued forth from Pannonia, in the year 568, under the reign of Justin; invaded Italy; and, having made themselves masters of the whole country, except Rome and Ravenna, erected a new kingdom at Ticinum. Under these new tyrants, who, to the natural ferocity of their characters, added an aversion to the religion of Jesus, the Christians, in the beginning, endured calamities of every kind. But the fury of these savage usurpers gradually subsided; and their manners contracted, from time to time, a milder character. Autharis, the third monarch of the Lombards, embraced Christianity, as it was professed by the Arians, in the year 587. But his successor Agilulf, who married his widow Theudelinda, was persuaded, by that princess, to abandon Arianism, and to adopt the tenets of the Catholics.

But the calamities of the Christians, in all other countries, were light and inconsiderable in comparison of those which they suffered in Persia under Chosroes, the inhuman monarch of that nation. This monster of impiety aimed his desperate efforts against heaven itself; for he publicly declared, that he would make war not only upon Justinian, but also upon the God of the Christians; and, in consequence of this blasphemous menace, he vented his rage against the followers of Jesus in the most barbarous manner, and put multitudes of them to the most cruel and ignominious deaths.

PART II.

The INTERNAL HISTORY of the CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

Concerning the state of letters and philosophy during this century.

I. **T**HE incursions of the barbarous nations into the greatest part of the western provinces, were extremely prejudicial to learning and philosophy. During these tumultuous scenes of desolation and horror, the liberal arts and sciences would have been totally extinguished, had they not found a place of refuge, such as it was, among the bishops and the monastic orders. Here they assembled their scattered remains, and received a degree of culture which just served to keep them from perishing. Those churches, which were distinguished by the name of Cathedrals, had schools erected under their jurisdiction, in which the bishop, or a certain person appointed by him, instructed the youth in the *seven liberal arts*, as a preparatory introduction to the study of the scriptures. Persons of both sexes, who had devoted themselves to the monastic life, were obliged, by the founders of their respective orders, to employ daily a certain portion of their time in reading the ancient doctors of the church. Hence libraries were formed in all the monasteries, and the pious and learned productions of the Christian and other writers, were copied and dispersed by the diligence of transcribers.

transcribers appointed for that purpose, who were generally such monks as, by weakness of constitution or other bodily infirmities, were incapable of harder labour. To these establishments we owe the preservation of all the ancient authors sacred and profane, who escaped the savage fury of Gothic ignorance, and are happily transmitted to our times. It is also to be observed, that, besides the schools that belonged to the cathedrals, there were others opened in the monasteries, in which the youth, who were set apart for the monastic life, were instructed by the abbot, or some of his ecclesiastics, in the arts and sciences.

II. But these institutions, however laudable, did not produce such happy effects as might have been expected. For not to speak of the indolence of certain abbots and bishops, who neglected entirely the duties of their stations, nor of the bitter aversion which others discovered towards every sort of learning, which they considered as pernicious to the progress of piety; not to speak of the *illiberal ignorance* which several prelates affected, and which they injudiciously confounded with *Christian simplicity*; even those who applied themselves to the study of the sciences, were, for the most part, extremely illiterate; and the branches of learning taught in the schools, were inconsiderable both as to their quality and their number. Greek literature was almost every where neglected; and those who, by profession, had devoted themselves to the culture of Latin, spent their time and labour in grammatical subtilties. Eloquence was degraded into a rhetorical bombast, a noisy kind of declamation, which was composed of motley and frigid allegories. As to the other liberal arts, they

shared the common calamity; and, as they were now cultivated, had nothing liberal or elegant in their appearance, consisting entirely in a few dry rules, which, instead of a finished system, produced only a ghastly and lifeless skeleton.

III. Philosophy fared still worse than literature: for it was entirely banished from all the seminaries which were under the inspection and government of the ecclesiastical order. The greatest part of these zealots looked upon the study of philosophy not only as useless, but even pernicious to religion. The most eminent, nay almost the only Latin philosopher of this age, was the celebrated Boethius, privy counsellor to Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths in Italy. This illustrious senator had embraced the Platonic philosophy, but approved also, as was usual among the modern Platonics, the doctrine of Aristotle. And it was undoubtedly owing to the diligence with which he explained and recommended the Aristotelian philosophy, that it arose now among the Latins to a higher degree of credit, than it had hitherto enjoyed.

IV. The state of the liberal arts among the Greeks was, in several places, much more flourishing than among the Latins; and the emperors raised a spirit of literary emulation, by the noble rewards and honours which they attached to the pursuit of learning. It is, however, certain, that notwithstanding these encouragements, the sciences were cultivated with less ardour, and men of learning and genius were less numerous than in the preceding century.

In the beginning of this, the modern Platonics maintained as yet their credit. The Alexandrian and Athenian schools flourished, under the direction of Damascius, Isidorus, Simplicius, and others.

others. But when the emperor Justinian, by a particular edict, prohibited the teaching philosophy at Athens, and when his resentment began to flame out against those who refused to abandon the Pagan worship, all these philosophers took refuge among the Persians. They, indeed, returned when the peace was concluded between the Persians and the Romans A. D. 533; but they could never recover their former credit.

Thus expired that famous sect, which was distinguished by the title of the Modern or Later Platonic; and which, for a series of ages, had produced such divisions in the Christian church, and been, in other respects, prejudicial to the progress of the gospel. It was succeeded by the Aristotelian philosophy, which arose imperceptibly out of its obscurity, and was placed in an advantageous light by the illustrations of the learned. And, indeed, the knowledge of this philosophy was necessary for the Greeks; since it was from the depths of this peripatetical wisdom, that the Eutychians and Nestorians drew the subtilties with which they endeavoured to overwhelm their opposers.

V. The Nestorians and Eutychians, who lived in the east, turned equally their eyes towards Aristotle, and, in order to train their respective followers to the field of controversy, translated the principal books of that deep philosopher into their native languages. Sergius translated the books of Aristotle into Syriac. Uranius, a Syrian, propagated the doctrines of this philosopher in Persia; and disposed in their favour Chosroes, the monarch of that nation, who became a zealous abettor of the peripatetic system. The same prince received from one of the Nestorian faction a translation of the Stagyrice into the Persian language.

C H A P. II.

Concerning the doctors and ministers of the church.

I. **T**HE external form of church-government continued without any remarkable alteration during this century. But the bishops of Rome and Constantinople were engaged in perpetual disputes about the extent of their respective jurisdictions, and seemed both to aspire at the supreme authority in ecclesiastical matters. The bishop of Constantinople not only claimed an unrivalled sovereignty over the eastern churches, but also maintained, that his church was, in point of dignity, no way inferior to that of Rome. The Roman pontiffs beheld, with impatience, these pretensions, and warmly asserted the pre-eminence of their church. In the year 588, John, bishop of Constantinople, surnamed the *Faster*, on account of his extraordinary abstinence, assembled, by his own authority, a council at Constantinople, to inquire into an accusation brought against Gregory, patriarch of Antioch; and, upon this occasion, assumed the title of *æcumenical*, or *universal bishop*. Now, although this title had been formerly enjoyed by the bishops of Constantinople, yet the bishop of Rome suspected that he was aiming at a supremacy over all the Christian churches; and therefore he opposed his claim in the most vigorous manner. But all his efforts were without effect; and the bishops of Constantinople continued to assume the title in question, though not in the sense in which it had alarmed the Roman pontiff.

II. Gregory the Great soon after opposed with vehemence the bishop of Constantinople, raised

raised new tumults among the sacred order, and aimed at no less than an unlimited supremacy over the Christian church. This ambitious design succeeded in the west; while, in the eastern provinces, his pretensions were scarcely respected by any but those who were at enmity with the bishop of Constantinople; and this prelate was always in a condition to make head against the progress of his authority in the east. How much the opinions of some were favourable to the demands of the Roman pontiffs, may be easily imagined from an expression of Ennodius, that infamous and extravagant flatterer of Symmachus. This parasitical panegyrist, among other assertions, maintained, that the Roman pontiff was constituted *judge in the place of God*, which he filled as the vice-gerent of the Most High. One would think that this servile adulator had never read the fourth verse of the second chapter of St. Paul's second *Epistle to the Thessalonians*, where the *Anti-Christ*, or *man of sin*, is described in the very terms in which he represents the authority of the pontiff Symmachus. On the other hand, it is certain, that both the emperors and the nations in general were far from being disposed to bear with patience the yoke of servitude, which the see of Rome was imposing upon the Christian church. The Gothic princes set bounds to the power of the bishop of Rome in Italy, permitted none to be raised to the pontificate without their approbation, and reserved to themselves the right of judging concerning the legality of every new election. They enacted spiritual laws, called the religious orders before their tribunals, and summoned councils by their legal authority. In consequence of all this, the pontiffs, amidst all their

high

high pretensions, revered the majesty of their kings and emperors, and submitted to their authority with the most profound humility; nor were they, as yet, so lost to all sense of shame, as to aim at the subjection of kings and princes to their dominion.

III. The rights and privileges of the clergy were very considerable before this period, and the riches, which they had accumulated, immense: and both received daily augmentations from the growth of superstition in this century. The arts of a rapacious priesthood were practised upon the ignorant devotion of the simple; and even the remorse of the wicked was made an instrument of increasing the ecclesiastical treasure. For an opinion was propagated with industry among the people, that the remission of their sins was to be purchased by their liberalities to the churches and monks, and that the prayers of departed saints, whose efficacy was victorious at the throne of God, were to be bought by offerings presented to the temples, which were consecrated to these mediators. But in proportion as the riches of the church increased, the various orders of the clergy were infected with those vices that are too often the consequences of prosperity. Hence the imperial edicts and the decrees of councils were so frequently levelled at their immoralities. But the effect of all these laws and edicts was very inconsiderable, for so high was the veneration paid to the clergy, that their most flagitious crimes were corrected by the slightest punishments: an unhappy circumstance, which added to their presumption, and rendered them more daring in iniquity.

IV. The

IV. The bishops of Rome, who considered themselves as the fathers of the Christian church; are not to be excepted from this censure. We may form some notion of their humility and virtue by that long and vehement contention, which arose in the year 498, between Symmachus and Laurentius, who were, on the same day, elected to the pontificate by different parties, and whose dispute was, at length, decided by Theodoric king of the Goths. Each of these ecclesiastics maintained the validity of his election; they reciprocally accused each other of the most detestable crimes; and their accusations did not appear, on either side, entirely destitute of foundation. Three different councils, assembled at Rome, endeavoured to terminate this schism, but without success. A fourth was summoned, by Theodoric, to examine the accusations brought against Symmachus, to whom this prince had, at the beginning of the schism, adjudged the papal chair. This council acquitted him of the crimes laid to his charge. But they acquitted him without so much as hearing those who accused him; and he himself did not appear, though frequently summoned.

V. The number and influence of the monks augmented daily in all parts of the Christian world. They multiplied so prodigiously in the east, that whole armies might have been raised out of the monastic order. The monastic life was also highly honoured, and had an incredible number of followers in all the western provinces. In Great Britain, a certain abbot, named Congall, is said to have persuaded an incredible number of persons to abandon the duties of social life, and to spend the remainder of their days in solitude, under a rule of discipline, of which he
was

was the inventor. His disciples travelled through many countries, in which they propagated, with such success, this monastic devotion, that in some time, Ireland, Gaul, Germany, and Switzerland, were, in a manner, covered with convents. The most illustrious disciple of the abbot now mentioned, was Columban, whose singular rule of discipline is yet extant, and surpasses all the rest in simplicity and brevity.

VI. A new order of monks, which in a manner absorbed all the others in the west, was instituted, A. D. 529, by Benedict of Nursia, a man of piety for the age he lived in. From his *rule* of discipline, which is yet extant, we learn that it was not his intention to impose it upon all the monastic societies, but to form an order whose discipline should be milder, their establishment more solid, and their manners more regular, than those of the other Monastic bodies; and whose members, during the course of a holy and peaceful life, were to divide their time between prayer, reading, the education of youth, and other pious and learned labours. But, in process of time, they degenerated sadly from the piety of their founder, and lost sight of the great end of their establishment. Having acquired immense riches from the devout liberality of the opulent, they sunk into luxury, intemperance, and sloth, abandoned themselves to all sorts of vices, extended their attention to worldly affairs, insinuated themselves into the cabinets of princes, took part in political cabals and court factions, made a vast augmentation of superstitious rites and ceremonies in their order, to blind the multitude, and, among other *meritorious* enterprizes, laboured to enlarge the authority of the Roman pontiff. Benedict never dreamt that the great
purposes

purposes of his institution were to be thus perverted. His rule of discipline was neither favourable to luxury nor ambition; and it is still celebrated, though it has not been observed for many ages.

Benedict changed, in several respects, the duties of the monastic life as it was regulated in the west. Among other things, he obliged those who entered into his order to promise, at the time of their being received as Novitiates, and afterwards, at their *admission* as members of the society, to persevere in an obedience to the rules he had laid down, without attempting to change them in any respect.

VII. This new order made a rapid progress in the west, and, in a short space of time, arrived at the most flourishing state. In Gaul, its interests were promoted by Maurus; in Sicily and Sardinia, by Placidus; in England, by Augustin and Mellitus; in Italy, and other countries, by Gregory the Great, who is himself reported to have been for some time a member of this society; and it was afterwards received in Germany by the means of Boniface. This sudden progress of the new order was ascribed, by the Benedictins, to the wisdom and sanctity of their discipline. But a more attentive view will convince the impartial observer, that the protection of the Roman pontiffs, to the advancement of whose grandeur the Benedictins were servilely devoted, contributed much more to the influence of their order, than any other circumstances, nay, than all other considerations united together. But, however universal their credit was, they did not reign alone; other orders subsisted in several places until the ninth century, when the Benedictin

absorbed all the other religious societies, and held, unrivalled, the reins of the monastic empire.

VIII. The most celebrated Greek and Oriental writers that flourished in this century were those which follow:

Procopius of Gaza, who interpreted successfully several books of scripture.

Agapetus, whose *Scheda Regia*, addressed to the emperor Justinian, procured him a place among the wisest and most judicious writers of this century.

Evagrius, a scholastic writer, whose *Ecclesiastical History* is, in many places, corrupted with fabulous narrations.

IX. Among the Latin writers the following are principally worthy of mention:

Gregory the Great, bishop of Rome, who united the most inconsistent and contradictory qualities; as in some cases he discovered a sound and penetrating judgment, and in others the most shameful and superstitious weakness; and in general manifested an extreme aversion to all kinds of learning, as his *Epistles* and *Dialogues* sufficiently testify.

Ennodius bishop of Ticinum, now Pavia, who was none of the meanest authors of this century, though he dishonoured his eloquence by his infamous adulation of the Roman pontiff, whom he exalted so high above all mortals, as to maintain, that he was answerable to none upon earth for his conduct.

Benedict of Nursia, who acquired an immortal name, by the *rule* he laid down for the order which he instituted, and the multitude of religious societies that submitted to his discipline.

Gregory

Gregory of Tours, who is esteemed the father of Gallic history; and who would have descended with honour to posterity, did not his *Annals of the Franks*, and the rest of his writings, carry so many marks of levity, credulity, and weakness.

Gildas, the most ancient of the British writers, who composed a book *Concerning the destruction of Britain*, in which there are several things not unworthy of the curiosity of the learned.

We may conclude this enumeration of the Latin writers with the illustrious names of Boethius and Cassiodorus, who far surpassed all their cotemporaries in learning and knowledge; the former shone forth with the brightest lustre in the republic of letters, as a philosopher, an orator, a poet, and a divine, and both in elegance and genius had no superior, nor indeed any equal in this century; the latter, though in many respects inferior to him, was nevertheless far from being destitute of merit. Several productions of these writers have been transmitted down to our times.

CHAP. III.

Concerning the doctrine of the Christian church during this century.

I. **W**HEN once the ministers of the church had departed from the ancient simplicity of religious worship, and sullied it by a motley mixture of human inventions, it was difficult to set bounds to this corruption. Abuses were daily multiplied, by an incredible number of absurdities. The controversial writers in the east continued to perplex the principal doctrines

of Christianity, by subtil distinctions borrowed from a vain and chimerical philosophy. The public teachers degenerated sadly from the apostolic character. They seemed to aim at nothing else, than to sink the multitude into the most opprobrious ignorance and superstition, to efface all sense of genuine piety, and to substitute, in the place of it, a blind veneration for the clergy, and a stupid zeal for a senseless round of ridiculous rites and ceremonies. Indeed, *the blind led the blind*; the public teachers of religion were, for the most part, grossly ignorant; nay, almost as much so as the multitude whom they were appointed to instruct.

II. To be convinced of the truth of this, cast an eye upon the doctrines now taught *Concerning the worship of images and saints, the fire of purgatory, the efficacy of good works, i. e. human rites and institutions, towards the attainment of salvation, the power of relicks to heal the diseases of body and mind*; and such like miserable fancies, which are inculcated in the superstitious productions of this century, particularly in the epistles and other writings of Gregory the Great.

III. The number of interpreters was considerable in this century. Those, who made the greatest figure among the Greeks, were Procopius of Gaza, Severus of Antioch, Julian, and a few others; the first was an expositor of no mean abilities. The most eminent rank among the Latin commentators is due to Gregory the Great, Cassiodorus, Primasius, and Isidore of Seville.

IV. It would be needless to expect, from the divines of this century, a clear and natural explanation of the Christian doctrine. The greatest part of them reasoned concerning the truths of the gospel, as the blind would argue about light and

and colours; and imagined that they had acquitted themselves nobly, when they had thrown out a heap of crude and indigested notions, and overwhelmed their adversaries with a torrent of words.

We may perceive however in the writers of this age, marks of the three different methods of explaining the doctrines of religion, which are yet practised among the Greeks and Latins. For some collected together a system of theological opinions from the writings of the ancient doctors, from the decrees of councils, and from the holy Scriptures. These gave rise to that species of divinity, which the Latins distinguished afterwards by the name of *positive theology*.

Others endeavoured to explain the doctrines of Christianity by reasoning upon their nature, their excellence, and fitness; and thus it was, with the weapons of *reason* and *argument*, that the most of the Christian doctors disputed against the Nestorians, the Eutychians, and the Pelagians. These metaphysical divines were called *schoolmen*, and their writings *scholastic divinity*.

A third class of theological teachers maintained that the knowledge of divine truth was only to be derived from mental contemplation. These were termed mystics. These three methods of unfolding the doctrines of the gospel have been transmitted down to our times.

V. They who enforced the duties of Christianity by *examples*, wrote, for this purpose, the *Lives of the saints*; and there was a considerable number of this kind both among the Greeks and Latins. Ennodius, Cyril of Scythopolis, and others, are to be ranked in this class. But, however pious these biographers may have been, they executed their design in a most contemptible

manner. No models of rational piety are to be found among those whom they propose as objects of imitation. They amuse their readers with trifling romances; the examples they exhibit are those of men of a corrupt and perverted judgment, who offered violence to reason by an extravagant austerity in their own conduct, and by the severity of those rules which they prescribed to others.

Many writers laboured to terminate the reigning controversies, but none with success. Nor shall we be much surprized, that these efforts were ineffectual, when we consider how they were conducted; for scarcely can we name a single writer, whose opposition to the Eutychians, Nestorians, and Pelagians, was carried on with probity, moderation, or prudence.

C H A P. IV.

Concerning the rites and ceremonies used in the church during this century.

I. **I**N this century the cause of true religion sunk apace, and the gloomy reign of superstition extended itself in proportion. This lamentable decay was supplied by a multitude of rites and ceremonies. In the east the Nestorian and Eutychian controversies gave occasion to the invention of various rites, which were used as marks to distinguish from each other the contending parties. The western churches were loaded with rites by Gregory the Great, who had a marvellous fecundity of genius in inventing, and an irresistible eloquence in recommending

ing superstitious observances. Nor will this appear surprizing to those who know, that, in the opinion of this pontiff, the *words* of the sacred writings were *images* of mysterious things; for such as embrace this chimerical system will easily be led to express all the doctrines of religion by external rites and symbols. Gregory, indeed, did not force others to the observance of his inventions; though this, perhaps, was as much owing to a want of power, as to a principle of moderation.

II. This prodigious augmentation of rites and ceremonies rendered an augmentation of interpreters of these mysteries necessary. Hence a new kind of science arose, which had, for its object, the explication of these ceremonies, and the investigation of the causes from whence they derived their origin. But the most of those, who entered into these researches, never went to the true sources of these idle inventions. They endeavoured to seek their origin in reason and Christianity; but in this they deceived themselves, and delivered to the world their own fancies, instead of letting them into the true causes of things. Had they been acquainted with the opinions and customs of antiquity, or studied the pontifical law of the Greeks and Romans, they had come at the true origin of many institutions, which were falsely looked upon as venerable and sacred.

III. The public worship of God was as yet celebrated by every nation in its own language; but was enlarged, from time to time, by the addition of various hymns, which were considered as proper to enliven devotion. Gregory the Great prescribed a new method of administering the Lord's supper, with a magnificent assemblage
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of pompous ceremonies; this institution of his was called the *canon of the mass*; and, if any are unwilling to give it the name of a new appointment, they must, at least, acknowledge that it was a considerable augmentation of the ancient canon for celebrating the eucharist, and occasioned a remarkable change in the administration of that ordinance. Many ages, however, passed before this *Gregorian canon* was adopted by all the Latin churches.

Baptism, except in cases of necessity, was administered only on great festivals. We must not omit mentioning the Litanies that were addressed to the saints, the different sorts of supplications, the *stations*, or assemblies of Gregory, the forms of consecration, and other such institutions, which were contrived, in this century, to excite a species of devotion.

IV. There was an incredible number of temples erected in honour of the saints, during this century, both in the eastern and western provinces. The places set apart for public worship were already very numerous; but it was now that Christians began to consider these edifices, as the means of purchasing the protection of the saints, and to be persuaded that these departed spirits guarded, against evils of every kind, the provinces, lands, cities, and villages, in which they were honoured with temples. The number of these temples was almost equalled by that of the festivals, which were now observed in the Christian church, and many of which were instituted upon a Pagan model. To those that were celebrated in the preceding century, were now added the festival of the *purification of the Blessed Virgin*, invented with a design to remove the uneasiness of the heathen converts on ac-

count of the loss of their *Iupercalia*, or feasts of *Pan*, which had been formerly observed in the month of February; the festival of the *immaculate conception*; the day set apart to commemorate the birth of St. John, and others less worthy of mention.

CHAP. V.

Concerning the divisions and heresies that troubled the church during this century.

I. **T**HE various sects, which had formerly fomented divisions among Christians, were far from being totally extirpated. The Manicheans gained such a degree of influence among the Persians, as to corrupt even the son of Cabades, the monarch of that nation, who repaid their zeal with a terrible massacre, in which numbers perished in the most dreadful manner. Nor was Persia the only country, which was troubled with the attempts of the Manicheans; other provinces of the empire were infected with their errors, as we may judge from the book that was written against them by Heraclian bishop of Chalcedon.

II. The Donatists enjoyed the sweets of freedom and tranquillity, as long as the Vandals reigned in Africa; but the scene was changed with respect to them, when the empire of these Barbarians was overturned in the year 534. They, however, remained in a separate body, and not only held their church, but, towards the conclusion of this century, and particularly from the year 591, defended themselves with new animosity

animosity and vigour. Gregory, the Roman pontiff, opposed these efforts with great spirit and assiduity; and, as appears from his epistles, tried various methods of depressing this faction. Nor was his opposition without effect; for in this century, the church of the Donatists dwindled away to nothing.

III. Towards the commencement of this century, the Arians were triumphant in several parts of Asia, Africa, and Europe. Many of the Asiatic bishops favoured them secretly, while their opinions were openly professed, and their cause maintained, by the Vandals in Africa, the Goths in Italy, the Spaniards, the Burgundians, the Suevi, and the greatest part of the Gauls. It is true, the Greeks who had received the decrees of the council of Nice, oppressed the Arians wherever their influence could reach; but the Nicenians, in their turn, were not less rigorously treated by their adversaries, particularly in Africa and Italy, where they felt, in a very severe manner, the weight of the Arian power, and the bitterness of their resentment.

The triumphs of Arianism were, however, but transitory; and its prosperous days were entirely eclipsed, when the Vandals were driven out of Africa, and the Goths out of Italy, by the arms of Justinian. For the other Arian princes were easily induced to abandon the doctrine of that sect; and to employ the force of laws and the authority of councils to prevent its further progress among their subjects, and to extirpate it entirely out of their dominions. Such was the conduct of Sigismund king of the Burgundians; Theodimir king of the Suevi, who had settled in Lusitania; and Recared king of Spain. Whether the change wrought

wrought in these princes was owing to the force of reason, or to the influence of hopes and fears, is a question which we shall not pretend to determine. One thing, however, is certain; and that is, that, from this period, the Arian sect declined apace, and could never after recover any considerable degree of stability and consistence.

IV. The Nestorians, after having gained a firm footing in Persia, and established the patriarch of their sect at Seleucia, extended their views further, and spread their doctrines, with a success equal to the ardour of their zeal, through the provinces that lay beyond the limits of the Roman empire. There are yet extant authentic records, from which it appears, that, throughout all Persia, as also in India, Armenia, Arabia, Syria, and other countries, there were vast numbers of Nestorian churches, all under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Seleucia. It is true, indeed, that the Persian monarchs were not all equally favourable to them, and that some of them even persecuted, with the utmost severity, all those who bore the Christian name; but it is also true, that such of these princes as were disposed to exercise moderation towards the Christians, were much more indulgent to the Nestorians, than to their adversaries who were considered as spies employed by the Greeks, with whom they were connected by the ties of religion.

V. The Eutychians flourished also in this century, and gained over a considerable part of the eastern provinces. The emperor Anastasius was warmly attached to them; and, in the year 513, created patriarch of Antioch, in the room of Flavian whom he had expelled from that see, Severus, a learned monk of Palestine, from whom the Eutychians were called Severians.

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This emperor exerted all his influence to destroy the credit of the council of Chalcedon in the east, and to maintain the cause of those who adhered to the doctrine of *one nature* in Christ; and, by the ardour of his zeal, he excited the most deplorable tumults in the church. After the death of Anastasius, which happened A. D. 518, Severus was expelled in his turn; and the sect which the late emperor had propagated with such assiduity, was every where depressed by his successor Justin, and the following emperors, in such a manner, that it seemed to be upon the very brink of ruin.

VI. When the affairs of the Eutychians were in such a desperate situation, that almost all hope of their recovery was vanished, and their bishops were reduced, by death and imprisonment, to a very small number, an obscure man, whose name was Jacob, and who was distinguished from others so called, by the surname of Baradæus, restored them to their prosperity. This poor monk, the grandeur of whose views was much above the obscurity of his station, and whose fortitude and patience no dangers could daunt, nor any labours exhaust, was ordained to the episcopal office by a handful of captive bishops, travelled on foot through the whole east, established bishops and presbyters every where, revived the drooping spirits of the Eutychians, and produced such an astonishing change in their affairs by his incredible activity and diligence, that when he died bishop of Edessa, A. D. 588, he left his sect in a most flourishing state in Syria, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Egypt, Nubia, Abyssinia, and other countries. This dexterous monk had prudence to contrive the means of success, as well as activity to put them in execution; for he almost totally

totally extinguished all the animosities, and reconciled all the factions, that had divided them; and when their churches grew so numerous in the east, that they could not all be conveniently comprehended under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Antioch, he appointed, as his assistant, the primate of the east, whose residence was at Tagritis, on the borders of Armenia. The laborious efforts of Jacob were seconded in Egypt, and the adjacent countries, by Theodosius bishop of Alexandria; and he became so famous, that all the Eutychians of the east considered him as their second parent, and are to this day called Jacobites in honour of their new chief.

VII. Thus it happened, that, by the imprudent zeal and violence which the Greeks employed in defending the truth, the Eutychians gained considerable advantages, and, at length, obtained a permanent settlement. From this period their sect has been under the jurisdiction of the patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch, who, notwithstanding the difference of opinion which subsists, with respect to some points, between the Syrian and Egyptian Monophysites, are extremely careful to maintain communion with each other both by letters and by the exchange of good offices. The primate of the Abyssines is subject to the patriarch of Alexandria; and the primate of the east, who resides at Tagritis, is under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Antioch. The Armenians are ruled by a bishop of their own, and are distinguished by certain opinions and rites from the rest of the Eutychians.

SEVENTH CENTURY.

PART I.

The EXTERNAL HISTORY of the CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

Concerning the prosperous events, which happened to the church during this century.

IN this century, Christianity was diffused far and wide through the darkened nations. The Nestorians, who dwelt in Syria, Persia, and India, contributed much to its propagation in the east, by the zeal and diligence, with which they preached it to these fierce and barbarous nations, who lived in the remotest borders and deserts of Asia. It was by their labours that the light of the gospel first penetrated into the immense empire of China, about the year 697, as will appear to those who look upon as genuine the famous Chinese monument, which was discovered, at Siganfu, during the last century. And there are other unexceptionable proofs, that the northern

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parts of China, even before this century, abounded with Christians, who, for many succeeding ages, were under a Metropolitan sent them by the Chaldean patriarch.

II. The Greeks were so occupied by their intestine divisions, that they were little solicitous about the progress of Christianity. In the west, Augustin laboured to extend the limits of the church, and to spread the light of the gospel among the Anglo-Saxons; and, after his death, other monks were sent from Rome to exert themselves in the same glorious cause. Their efforts were attended with success, in the conversion of the six Anglo-Saxon kings, who had hitherto remained heathens, to the Christian faith, which was, at length, embraced throughout all Britain.

III. Many of the British, Scotch, and Irish ecclesiastics travelled among the Batavian, Belgic, and German nations, with the pious intention of propagating the knowledge of the truth, and of erecting churches every where. This was the true reason which induced the Germans, in aftertimes, to found so many convents for the Scotch and Irish.

Columban, an Irish monk, seconded by the labours of a few companions, had happily extirpated, in the preceding century, the ancient superstitions in Gaul. He also carried the lamp of celestial truth among the Suevi, the Boii, the Franks, and other German nations, and persevered in these pious labours until his death, which happened A. D. 615. St. Gal, who was one of his companions, preached the gospel to the Swiss, and the Suevi. St. Kilian set out from Scotland, the place of his nativity, and exercised the ministerial function with such success among the eastern Franks, that vast numbers of

them embraced Christianity. Towards the conclusion of this century, the famous Willebrord, by birth an Anglo-Saxon, accompanied with eleven of his countrymen, crossed over the sea, in order to convert the Frieslanders to the religion of Jesus. From thence, in the year 692, they went into the isle of Helgoland; but being cruelly treated there by Radbod, king of the Frieslanders, who put one of the company to death, they departed thence for the adjacent parts of Denmark. They, however, returned to Friesland A. D. 693, and were much more successful than they had formerly been in propagating the knowledge of the truth. Willebrord was ordained, by the Roman pontiff, archbishop of Utrecht, and died among the Batavians in a good old age; while his associates continued to spread the light of the gospel among the Westphalians, and the neighbouring countries.

IV. These voyages, and many others, undertaken in the cause of Christ, carry, no doubt, a specious appearance; but the impartial inquirer will find it impossible to form the same favourable judgment of them all. That the designs of some of these laborious missionaries were truly pious, and their characters without reproach, is certain. But it is equally certain, that this was neither the case of them all, nor of the greatest part of them. Many of them discovered, in the course of their ministry, the most turbulent passions, and dishonoured the cause in which they were engaged, by their arrogance and ambition, their avarice and cruelty. They abused the power, which they had received from the Roman pontiffs, of forming religious establishments among the superstitious nations; and, instead of gaining souls to Christ, usurped a despotic dominion; and exercised

exercised a princely authority over the countries where their ministry had been successful.
 IV. The conversion of the Jews seemed at a stand in this century; few or none embraced the gospel in consequence of inward conviction, though in many places they were barbarously compelled to make an outward profession of their faith in Christ. The emperor Heraclius, incensed against that miserable people, persecuted them in a cruel manner, and ordered multitudes of them to be dragged into the Christian churches, in order to be baptized by violence. The same odious method of converting was practised in Spain and Gaul, by the monarchs of those nations. Such were the horrid practices to which an ignorance of the true spirit of Christianity, and the barbarous genius of this age, led the heralds of that divine religion, which was designed to spread abroad *charity* upon earth, and to render mankind truly and rationally *free*.

CHAPTER II.

Concerning the calamitous events that happened to the church during this century.

I. **T**HE Christians suffered less in this, than in the preceding centuries. They were sometimes persecuted by the Persian monarchs, but still recovered their former tranquillity after transitory scenes of violence. In England, the new converts to Christianity suffered various calamities under the petty kings; but these kings soon embraced the gospel themselves, and then the sufferings of the Christians ceased. In the eastern

eastern countries, and particularly in Palestine, the Jews, at certain times, attacked the Christians with a merciless fury; but with so little success, that they always had reason to repent of their temerity, which was severely chastised.

II. But a new and most powerful enemy to the Christian cause started up in Arabia. About 610, under the reign of Heraclius. This was Mahomet, an illiterate man, but endowed with the most flowing and attractive eloquence, and with a vast and penetrating genius. This adventurous impostor declared publicly, that he was commissioned by God, to destroy polytheism and idolatry, and to reform, first the religion of the Arabians; and afterwards the Jewish and Christian worship. For these purposes he delivered a new law, which is known by the name of the Koran; and having gained several victories over his enemies, compelled an incredible multitude of persons, both in Arabia and the neighbouring nations, to receive his doctrine, and range themselves under his standards. Elated with this rapid success, he extended his views, and formed the arduous project of founding an empire. Here again, success crowned his efforts; and his plan was executed with such intrepidity, that he died master of all Arabia, besides several adjacent provinces.

III. Possibly Mahomet did really imagine that he was supernaturally commissioned to reform the religion of the Arabians. It is, however, undoubtedly evident, that, when he saw his enterprise crowned with success, he made use of impious frauds to establish the work, deluded the credulous multitude by various artifices, and forged celestial visions to confirm his authority. To speak the plain truth, he was one of the most consummate

consummate villains that ever breathed upon earth. Although "The learned Sales," (as Dr. Maclaine files him!) endeavours to parallel him with Jesus Christ! And I marvel how Dr. Morel can stile that insolent Deist,

Præclarus & Præstantissimus Auctor!

IV. The rapid success, which attended the propagation of this new religion, was owing to causes that are evident, and must remove, or rather prevent, our surprize, when they are attentively considered. The terror of Mahomet's arms, and the repeated victories which were gained by him and his successors, were the irresistible argument that persuaded such multitudes to embrace his religion. Besides, his law was artfully adapted to the corrupt nature of man; and more particularly to the manners of the eastern nations; for the articles of faith were few in number, and extremely simple; and the duties it required were neither many, nor difficult, nor such as were incompatible with the empire of the worst appetites and passions. It is to be observed further, that the gross ignorance, under which the Arabians, Syrians, Persians, and the greatest part of the eastern nations, laboured at this time, rendered many an easy prey to the artifice and eloquence of this bold adventurer. To these causes of the progress of Mahometism, we may add the bitter dissensions that reigned among the Christian sects; dissensions that filled a great part of the east with such enormities, as rendered the very name of Christianity odious. We might add, that the Nestorians, full of resentment against the Greeks, from whom they had suffered the most injurious treatment, assisted the Arabians in the conquest of several provinces,

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into which, of consequence, the religion of Mahomet was introduced.

V. After the death of Mahomet, which happened A. D. 632, his followers, led on by an amazing intrepidity, and assisted by those Christians whom the Greeks had treated with such severity, extended their conquests beyond the limits of Arabia, and subdued Syria, Persia, Egypt, and other countries. On the other hand, the Greeks, exhausted with civil discords, and wholly occupied by intestine troubles, were unable to stop these intrepid conquerors in their rapid career.

For some time these enthusiastic invaders used their prosperity with moderation, and treated the Christians, particularly those who rejected the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, with the utmost indulgence and lenity. But as uninterrupted prosperity renders, too generally, corrupt mortals insolent and imperious, so this moderation degenerated, by degrees, into severity; and they treated the Christians, at length, rather like slaves than citizens, loading them with insupportable taxes, and obliging them to submit to a variety of vexations.

VI. Their progress, however, received a considerable check by the civil dissensions, which arose among them after the death of Mahomet. Abubeker and Ali, the former the father-in-law, and the latter the son-in-law of this pretended prophet, aspired both to succeed him. Upon this arose a tedious and cruel contest, whose flame reached to succeeding ages, and produced that schism which divided the Mahometans into two great factions, whose separation not only gave rise to a variety of opinions, but also excited the most deadly animosities. Of these factions,

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the one acknowledged Abubeker as the true *calif*, or successor of Mahomet; while the other adhered to Ali. Both however adhered to the Koran as a divine law; to which, indeed, the former added, by way of interpretation, the *sonna*, i. e. a certain law which they looked upon as descended from Mahomet by oral tradition. Among the followers of Abubeker, we are to reckon the Turks, Tartars, Arabians, Africans, and part of the Indian Mahometans; whereas the Persians and the subjects of the Grand Mogul are generally considered as the followers of Ali; though the latter seem rather to observe a strict neutrality in this contest.

NOTHING can be more remarkable than the partial account of which will appear incredible to those who are unacquainted with the productions of this barbarous period. Any remains of learning that yet survived, were a few cases excepted, to be found principally among the Latin, in the obscure retreats of monks. The monastic institutions prohibited the election of any abbot who was not a man of learning, or at least, endowed with a tolerable measure of the erudition of the times. The monks were obliged to consecrate certain hours every day to study; and that they might improve his appointment to the most advantageous purposes, there were in most of the monasteries, stated times marked out, at which they were to assemble, in order to communicate to each other the fruits of their study. The youth also, who were destined for the service of the church, were obliged to prepare themselves by a diligent application to study; and in this they were directed by the monks, one of whose principal occupations it was to preside over the education of the rising priesthood.

PART II.

The INTERNAL HISTORY of the CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

Concerning the state of letters and philosophy during this century.

I. **N**OTHING can equal the ignorance that reigned in this century; the most impartial account of which will appear incredible to those who are unacquainted with the productions of this barbarous period. Any remains of learning that yet survived, were, a few cases excepted, to be found principally among the Latins, in the obscure retreats of monks. The monastic institutions prohibited the election of any abbot who was not a man of learning, or, at least, endowed with a tolerable measure of the erudition of the times. The monks were obliged to consecrate certain hours every day to study: and, that they might improve this appointment to the most advantageous purposes, there were, in most of the monasteries, stated times marked out, at which they were to assemble, in order to communicate to each other the fruits of their study. The youth also, who were destined for the service of the church, were obliged to prepare themselves by a diligent application to study: and in this they were directed by the monks, one of whose principal occupations it was to preside over the education of the rising priesthood.

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It must, however, be acknowledged, that all these institutions were of little use to the advancement of solid learning, because very few were acquainted with the liberal arts and sciences, or with the important ends which they were to serve; and the greatest part of those who were looked upon as learned men, threw away their time in reading the marvellous lives of a parcel of fanatical saints, instead of employing it in the perusal of well-chosen authors. They, who distinguished themselves most, carried their studies little farther than the works of Augustin and Gregory the Great: and it is of scraps collected out of these two writers, that the best productions of this century are entirely composed.

II. The sciences enjoyed no degree of protection from kings and princes, nor did they owe any thing to men of eminent stations in the empire. On the other hand, the schools which had been committed to the care of the bishops, whose ignorance and indolence were now become enormous, began to decline apace. The bishops in general were so illiterate, that few were capable of composing the discourses which they delivered. Many instances of the ignorance and barbarity of this century will occur to those who have any acquaintance with the writers it produced. England, it is true, was happier in this respect than the other nations of Europe, which was principally owing to Theodore of Tarsus, who was appointed archbishop of Canterbury, and contributed much to introduce, among the English, a taste for literary pursuits.

III. In Greece, the fate of the sciences was lamentable. A turgid eloquence, and an affected pomp of style, were the highest point of perfection

fection to which both prose writers and poets aspired. The Latin eloquence was still vastly below that of the Greeks; it had not spirit enough even to be turgid, and, a few compositions excepted, was sunk to the very lowest degree of barbarity. Both the Greek and Latin writers, who attempted historical compositions, degraded that important science. Moschus and Sophronius among the former; and among the latter, Braulio, Dado, and Adamannus, wrote the lives of several saints; or rather a heap of ridiculous fables, void of the least air of probability.

IV. Among the Latins, philosophy was at its lowest ebb. If there were any that retained some faint reluctance to abandon it entirely, such confined their studies to the writings of Boetius and Cassiodorus, from which they committed to memory a certain number of sentences; and that was all their philosophical stock. The Greeks, abandoning Plato to the monks, gave themselves entirely up to the direction of Aristotle, and studied, with eagerness, the subtleties of his logic, which were of signal use in the controversies carried on between them.

CHAP. II.

Concerning the doctors and ministers of the church, and its form of government, during this century.

I. **T**HE disputes about pre-eminence, that had so long subsisted between the bishops of Rome and Constantinople, proceeded, in this century, to such violent lengths, as laid the foundations of that deplorable schism, which afterwards

wards separated the Greek and Latin churches. The most learned writers are generally agreed that Boniface III. engaged Phocas, that abominable tyrant, who waded to the imperial throne through the blood of the emperor Mauritianus, to take from the bishop of Constantinople the title of *æcumenical*, or *universal bishop*, and to confer it upon the Roman pontiff.

II. The Roman pontiffs used all methods to maintain and enlarge their authority. But not only several emperors and princes, but also whole nations, opposed the ambitious views of the bishops of Rome. We have many proofs of the influence, which the civil magistrate yet retained in religious matters, and of the subordination of the Roman pontiffs to the regal authority. It is true, the Roman writers affirm, that Constantine Pogonatus abdicated the privilege of confirming the election of the bishop of that city. But this cannot be proved. It is however certain, that this emperor abated the sum, which, since the time of Theodoric, the bishops of Rome had been obliged to pay to the imperial treasury before they could be ordained, or have their election confirmed.

The ancient Britons and Scots persisted long in the maintenance of their religious liberty; and neither the threats nor promises of the legates of Rome could engage them to submit to the authority of the pontiff. The churches of Gaul and Spain attributed no more authority to the bishop of Rome, than they thought suitable to their own dignity. And even in Italy, his supreme authority was obstinately rejected, since the bishop of Ravenna, and other prelates, refused an implicit submission to his orders. Besides all this, multitudes of private persons expressed publicly, and without the least hesitation, their

abhorrence of the vices of the pontiffs; and it is highly probable, that the Waldenses or Vaudois had already retired into the vallies of Piedmont, that they might be more at their liberty to oppose the tyranny of those imperious prelates.

III. The progress of vice among the subordinate rulers and ministers of the church was truly deplorable; neither bishops, presbyters, deacons, nor even the cloistered monks, were exempt from the general contagion. In those very places, that were consecrated to the service of God, there was little else to be seen than ambition, avarice, pious frauds, intolerable pride, and a supercilious contempt of the people, with many other vices still more enormous. There reigned also in many places the most bitter dissensions between the bishops and the monks. The former had employed the greedy hands of the latter to augment the episcopal treasure, and to draw contributions from all parts to support them in their luxury. The monks perceiving this, and also unwilling to serve the bishops in such a dishonourable character, fled for refuge to the emperors and princes, under whose civil jurisdiction they lived; and afterwards, for their further security, to the protection of the Roman pontiff. This protection they readily obtained, and the pontiffs, always fond of exerting their authority, exempted, by degrees, the monastic orders from the jurisdiction of the bishops. The monks, in return for this important service, devoted themselves wholly to advance the interests and dignity of the bishop of Rome. They represented him as a sort of god to the ignorant multitude, over whom they had gained a prodigious ascendant.

IV. In

IV. In the mean time the monks were every where in high repute, particularly among the Latins, through the favour of the Roman pontiff, and their affectation of uncommon piety. The heads of families, striving to surpass each other in their zeal for monkery, dedicated their children to God by shutting them up in convents, which they looked upon as the highest felicity; nor did they fail to send with these innocent victims a rich dowry. Abandoned profligates, who had passed their days in the most enormous pursuits, were comforted with the hopes of obtaining pardon, and making atonement for their crimes, by leaving the greatest part of their fortune to some monastic society. Several ecclesiastics laid down rules for the direction of the monastic orders. But afterwards the rule prescribed by St. Benedict, was almost universally followed.

V. The writers of this age, who distinguished themselves by their genius or erudition, were very few. Among the Greeks, the first rank is due to Maximus, a monk, who composed some illustrations upon the holy scriptures, and was, upon the whole, a man of no mean capacity.

Among the Latin writers, Ildefonse, archbishop of Toledo, was reputed for his learning. We have yet extant *Two books of epistles*, written by Desiderius, bishop of Cahors, and published by the learned Canisius. And Aldhelm, an English prelate, composed several poems *Concerning the Christian life*, which exhibit but indifferent marks of genius.

C H A P. III.

Concerning the doctrine of the Christian Church in this century.

I. **I**N this barbarous age, religion lay expiring under an enormous heap of superstitious inventions. In the earlier periods of the church, the worship of Christians was confined to the one Supreme God, and his Son Jesus Christ: but the Christians of this century paid homage to the remains of the cross, to the images of the saints, and to bones, whose real owners were extremely dubious. The primitive Christians, in order to excite men to piety, set before them that heavenly state, and those mansions of misery, which the gospel has revealed as the different portions of the righteous and the wicked: while the Christians of this century talked of nothing so much as a certain fire, which effaced the stains of vice, and purified souls from their corruption. The *former* taught that Christ, by his sufferings and death, had made atonement for the sins of mortals; the *latter* seemed to exclude from the kingdom of heaven, such as had not contributed to augment the riches of the clergy. The *former* were only studious to attain to a virtuous simplicity of life; while the *latter* placed the whole of religion in external rites.

II. While philosophy and theology had scarcely any remains of life among the Latins, the Greeks were wholly occupied with controversies. The dry and insipid body of divinity, composed by Taio, or Tago, bishop of Saragossa, under the title of *Five Books of Sentences*,

is scarcely worthy of mention, though, in this century, it was considered as an admirable and immortal work.

Several particular branches of doctrine were treated by the theological writers of this age: thus Maximus wrote concerning the nature of Theology, and the *Manifestation of the son in the flesh*; and also concerning the *Two natures in Christ*; and Theodore Raithu composed a treatise concerning *Christ's Incarnation*. But a

small acquaintance with them will enable us to form a just, though disadvantageous idea of the merit of these performances. The moral writers of this century, and their miserable productions, shew to what a wretched state that important science was now reduced. Among these moralists, the first rank is due to Dorotheus, author of the *Ascetic Dissertations*; Maximus; Hesychius; Thalassius; and some others; yet even in their productions, what groveling notions do we find? What rubbish, what an heap of superstitious fancies?

III. Theodore of Tarsus, a Grecian monk, restored among the Latins the discipline of penance, as it is commonly termed, which had been for a long time almost totally neglected. This zealous prelate, being raised beyond his expectation to the see of Canterbury, A. D. 668, formed and executed several pious and laudable projects; and among other things reduced to a regular science that branch of ecclesiastical law, which is known by the name of *penitential discipline*. He published a *Penitential*, which was entirely new to the Latin world, by which the clergy were taught to distinguish sins into various classes, according as they were more or less heinous; to determine the degrees

of their guilt by their nature and consequences, the intention of the offender, the time and place in which they were committed, and the circumstances with which they were attended. This new *Penitential* contained also the methods of proceeding with respect to offenders; pointed out the penalties that were suitable to the various classes of transgressions; prescribed the forms of *consolation*, *exhortation*, and *absolution*; and described, in an accurate manner, the duties of those who were to receive the confessions of the penitent. This new discipline was eagerly adopted by the Latin churches; and, in a short time, passed from Britain into all the western provinces, where the book of Theodore became the model of all other *penitentials*. But the duration of this discipline was transitory; for, in the eighth century, it began to decline, and was, at length, entirely supplanted by what was called the new canon of *indulgences*.

IV. The doctors who opposed the various sects are scarcely worthy of mention, and would deserve still less an attentive perusal, did not their writings contribute to illustrate the history of the times in which they lived.

As to the dissensions of the Catholic Christians among themselves, they produced, at this time, few or no events worthy of mention. We shall, therefore, only observe, that in this century were sown the seeds of those fatal discords, which rent asunder the bonds of Christian communion between the Greek and Latin churches.

In Britain, warm controversies, concerning the time of celebrating the Easter festival, were carried on between the ancient Britons and the new converts to Christianity, which Augustin had

had made among the Anglo-Saxons. But the fundamental doctrines of Christianity were not affected by these controversies, which, on that account, were less important than they would have otherwise been. And they were entirely terminated in the eighth century, in favour of the Anglo-Saxons.

C H A P. IV.

Concerning the rites and ceremonies used in the church during this century.

I. **I**N a council at Constantinople, the Greeks enacted several laws concerning the ceremonies that were to be observed in divine worship, which rendered their ritual, in some respects, different from that of the Romans. These laws were publicly received by all the churches, which were established in the dominions of the Grecian emperors; and also by those which were joined with them in communion, though under the jurisdiction of Barbarian princes. Nor was this all: for every Roman pontiff added something new to the ancient rites, as if it was an essential mark of their zeal, to divert the multitude with new spectacles of devout mummary. These superstitious inventions were, in the time of Charlemagne, propagated from Rome among the other Latin churches, whose subjection to the Roman ritual was necessary to satisfy the demands of the lordly pontiff.

II. It will not be improper to select here a few instances of the multiplication of religious rites in this century. The number of festivals was augmented;

augmented; a new festival was instituted in honour of the cross on which Christ suffered, and another in commemoration of the Saviour's ascension into heaven. Boniface V. enacted that infamous law, by which the churches became places of refuge to all who fled thither for protection; a law which procured impunity to the most enormous crimes, and gave a loose to the most abandoned profligates. Honorius employed all his zeal in embellishing churches with the most pompous ornaments. We shall pass in silence the riches and variety of the sacerdotal garments that were now used at the celebration of the eucharist, and in the performance of divine worship.

CHAP. V.

Concerning the divisions and heresies that troubled the church during this century.

THE Greeks were now engaged in the most bitter controversy with the Paulicians, whom they considered as a branch of the Manichean sect. This dispute was carried to the greatest height under the reigns of Constans, Constantine Pogonatus, and Justinian II; and the Greeks were not only armed with arguments, but with military legions, and the terror of penal laws. In Italy, the Lombards preferred the opinions of the Arians to the doctrine which was established by the council of Nice. In Gaul and in England, the Pelagian controversies continued. In the eastern provinces, the ancient sects, which had been weakened by the imperial laws, but not totally destroyed, began, in many places,

places, to raise their heads. The penal laws had obliged them, for some time, to seek their safety in obscurity; but as soon as the power of their adversaries diminished, their courage was renewed.

II. The condition both of the Nestorians and Eutychians was much more flourishing under the Saracens, than it had been under the Christian emperors. These two sects met with a distinguished protection from their new masters, while the Greeks suffered under the same scepter the rigours of persecution. Jesuiabas, the sovereign pontiff of the Nestorians, concluded a treaty first with Mahomet, and afterwards with Omar, by which he obtained many signal advantages for his sect. There is yet extant a *Diploma* of Mahomet, in which he promises the Christians, in his dominions, the quiet enjoyment of their religion, together with their temporal possessions. Some learned men have, indeed, called in question the authenticity of this deed; it is however certain, that the Mahometans unanimously acknowledge it to be genuine. Accordingly, the successors of Mahomet in Persia employed the Nestorians in the most important affairs, both of the cabinet and of the provinces, and suffered the patriarch of that sect only, to reside in the kingdom of Babylon. The Eutychians enjoyed in Syria and Egypt an equal degree of favour and protection.

III. Though the Greek church was already torn asunder by the most lamentable divisions, yet its calamities were far from being at an end. A new sect arose, A. D. 630, under the reign of the emperor Heraclius, which, in a short space of time, excited violent commotions. The source of this tumult was an unseasonable plan

plan of peace. Heraclius, considering the detriment which the Grecian empire had suffered by the migration of the persecuted Nestorians, was ardently desirous of reuniting the Eutychians to the bosom of the Greek church. Pursuant to this, he held a conference, A. D. 622, with a certain person named Paul, a man of great authority among the Armenian Eutychians; and another, at Hierapolis, in the year 629, with Athanasius, the bishop of that seat, upon the methods proper to restore tranquillity to a divided church. Both these persons assured the emperor, that they who maintained the doctrine of *one nature*, might be induced to receive the decrees of the council of Chalcedon, and thereby to terminate their controversy with the Greeks, provided the latter would assent to the following proposition, *viz. that in Jesus Christ there was, after the union of the two natures, but one will, and one operation.* Heraclius communicated this matter to Sergius, patriarch of Constantinople. This prelate gave it as his opinion, that the doctrine of *one will and one operation*, after the union of the two natures, might be safely adopted without the smallest detriment to the authority of the council of Chalcedon. In consequence of this, the emperor published an edict, A. D. 630, in favour of that doctrine, and hoped, by this, to restore peace and concord both in church and state.

IV. The first reception of this new project was promising, and things seemed to go on smoothly. For though some ecclesiastics refused submitting to the imperial edict, yet Cyrus and Athanasius, the patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch, received it without hesitation; and the see of Jerusalem was at that time vacant.

In the mean time, Cyrus, who had been promoted by Heraclius, from the see of Phasis to that of Alexandria, assembled a council, by which the doctrine of *one will*, which the emperor had introduced by the edict, was solemnly confirmed. This had the desired effect upon the Eutychians, and induced great numbers of them, to return into the bosom of the church.

V. But this smiling prospect of peace was transitory, and was unhappily succeeded by dreadful tumults excited by a monk of Palestine, whose name was Sophronius. This monk, being present at the council assembled at Alexandria by Cyrus, in the year 633, had violently opposed the decree, which confirmed the doctrine of *one will* in Christ. His opposition, which was then treated with contempt, became more formidable the following year; when, raised to the patriarchal see of Jerusalem, he summoned a council, in which that decree was condemned as heresy. Multitudes, alarmed at the cry of heresy raised by this seditious monk, adopted his sentiments; but it was Honorius, the Roman pontiff, that he laboured principally to gain over to his side. His efforts, however, were vain: for Sergius, the patriarch of Constantinople, having informed Honorius of the true state of the question, determined that pontiff in favour of the doctrine, which maintained *one will* and *one operation* in Christ. Hence arose those obstinate contests, which rent the church into two sects, and the state into two factions.

VI. In order to put an end to these commotions, Heraclius issued out, in the year 639, the famous edict composed by Sergius, and called the *Echesis*, or exposition of the faith,

in which all controversies upon the question, whether in Christ there was one, or two operations, were strictly prohibited, though in the same edict the doctrine of *one will* was plainly inculcated. A considerable number of the eastern bishops declared their assent to this new law, which was also received by their chief Pyrrhus, who, upon the death of Sergius in the year 639, was raised to the see of Constantinople. In the west, the case was quite different. John the fourth assembled a council at Rome, A. D. 639, in which the *Ekthesis* was rejected. Nor was this all: for in the progress of this contest, a new edict, known by the name of *Type* or *Formulary*, was published in the year 648, by the emperor Constans, by which the *Ekthesis* was suppressed, and the contending parties commanded to observe a profound silence upon that subject. This silence, which was so wisely commanded, appeared highly criminal to the angry and contentious monks. They, therefore, excited Martin, bishop of Rome, to oppose his authority to an edict, which hindered them from propagating strife and contention in the church; and their importunities had the desired effect; for this prelate, in a council, assembled at Rome A. D. 649, condemned both the *Ekthesis* and the *Type*.

VII. The emperor Constans, justly irritated at these impudent proceedings of Martin, who treated the imperial laws with such contempt, ordered him to be seized and carried into the isle of Naxos, where he was kept prisoner a whole year. At the same time, Maximus, the ring-leader of the seditious monks, was banished to Bizyca.

VIII. It is difficult to give a clear and accurate account of the sentiments of those who were called

called Monothelites; nor is it easy to point out the objections of their adversaries. Neither of the contending parties express themselves consistently with what seem to have been their respective opinions; and they both disavow the errors with which they charge each other. The following observations contain the clearest notion we can form of this subtil controversy.

1. The Monothelites declared, that they had no connexion with the Eutychians; but maintained, in opposition to them, that in Christ there were two distinct natures, which were so united, though without the least mixture or confusion, as to form by their union only one person. 2. They acknowledged that the soul of Christ was endowed with a will, which it still retained after its union with the divine nature. For they taught that Christ was not only perfect God, but also perfect man; from whence it followed, that his soul was endowed with the faculty of volition. 3. They denied that this faculty of volition in the soul of Christ, was absolutely unactive, maintaining, on the contrary, that it co-operated with the divine will. 4. They, therefore, in effect, attributed to our Lord two wills, and these moreover operating and active. 5. They however affirmed, that, in a certain sense, there was in Christ but one will and one manner of operation.

IX. The doctrine of the Monothelites, condemned by the council of Constantinople, found a place of refuge among the Mardaites, a people who inhabited the mounts Libanus and Antilibanus, and who, about the conclusion of this century, were called Maronites, after Maro their first bishop, a name which they still retain. None of the ancient writers give any certain

account of the first person who instructed these Mountaineers in the doctrine of the Monothelites; it is probable, however, that it was John Maro, whose name they had adopted. One thing, indeed, we know from unexceptionable witnesses, that the Maronites retained the opinions of the Monothelites until the twelfth century, when renouncing the doctrine of *one will* in Christ, they were re-admitted, in the year 1182, to the communion of the Roman church.

X. Neither the sixth general council, in which the Monothelites were condemned, nor the fifth, which had been assembled in the preceding century, had determined any thing concerning ecclesiastical discipline or religious ceremonies. To supply this defect, a new assembly of bishops was held pursuant to the order of Justinian II. in a spacious hall of the imperial palace called *Trullus*, i. e. *Cupola*, from the form of the building. This council, which met A. D. 692, was called *Quinisextum*, from its being considered, by the Greeks, as a supplement to the fifth and sixth œcumenical councils. There are yet extant an hundred and two laws, which were enacted in this council, and which related to the external celebration of divine worship, the government of the church, and the lives and manners of Christians. Of these there are six, which are diametrically opposite to several opinions and rites of the Romish church; for which reason the Roman pontiffs have refused to adopt the decisions of this council. The Roman Catholics reject the following decisions of this council: 1. The fifth canon, which approves of the eighty-five apostolical canons commonly attributed to Clement.

2. The

2. The thirteenth *canon*, which allows priests to marry. 3. The fifty-fifth *canon*, which condemns the Sabbath fast, which was an institution of the Latin church. 4. The sixty-seventh *canon*, which prescribes the most rigorous abstinence from blood and things strangled. 5. The eighty-second *canon*, which prohibits the representing Christ under the image of a lamb. 6. The thirty-sixth *canon*, concerning the equal authority of the bishops of Rome and Constantinople.

B O O K III.

Containing the HISTORY of the CHURCH,
from CHARLEMAGNE to the Reformation
by LUTHER.

The EIGHTH CENTURY.

PART I.

The EXTERNAL HISTORY of the CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

*Concerning the prosperous events which happened
to the church during this century.*

I. **W**HILE the Mahometans were infesting
with their arms, and adding to their
conquests, the most flourishing provinces of Asia,
and obscuring, as far as their influence could
extend, the glory of the rising church, the Nes-
torians of Chaldea were carrying the lamp of
Christianity among those barbarous nations,
called Scythians by the ancients, and by the
moderns, Tartars, who, independent on the
Saracen yoke, had fixed their habitations within
the limits of mount Imaus. It is now well
known, that Timotheus, the Nestorian pontiff,
who had been raised to that dignity A. D. 778,
converted to the Christian faith, by the ministry
of

of Subchal Jesu, whom he had consecrated bishop, first the Gelæ and Dailamites, by whom a part of Hyrcania was inhabited; and afterwards, by the labours of other missionaries, the rest of the nations, who had formed settlements in Hyrcania, Bactria, Margiana, and Sogdia. It is also certain, that Christianity enjoyed in these vast regions, notwithstanding the violent attacks of the Mahometans to which it was sometimes exposed, the advantages of a firm and solid establishment for a long course of ages; while the bishops, by whose ministry it was propagated and supported, were all consecrated by the authority of the Nestorian pontiff.

II. If we turn our eyes towards Europe, we find many nations that were as yet unenlightened with the knowledge of the gospel. Almost all the Germans (if we except the Bavarians, who had embraced Christianity under Theodoric, or Thierry, the son of Clovis, and the eastern Franks, with a few other provinces) lay buried in the grossest darkness of Pagan superstition. Many attempts were made, by pious men, to infuse the truth into the minds of these savage Germans; and various efforts were used for the same purpose by kings and princes, whose interest it was to propagate a religion that was so adapted to mitigate the ferocity of these warlike nations; but neither the attempts of pious zeal, nor the efforts of policy, were attended with success. This great work was, however, effected in this century, by the ministry of Winfrid, a Benedictine monk, born in England of illustrious parents, and afterwards known by the name of Boniface. This ecclesiastic, attended by two companions, passed over into Friesland, A. D. 715, to preach the gospel to the people

of that country; but this first attempt was unsuccessful; and a war breaking out between Radbod, the king of that country, and Charles Martel, our zealous missionary returned to England. He resumed his pious undertaking in the year 719; and being solemnly impowered by the Roman pontiff Gregory II. to preach the gospel not only in Friesland, but all over Germany, he performed the functions of a Christian teacher among the Thuringians, Frielanders, and Hessians with considerable success.

III. This eminent missionary was, in the year 723, consecrated bishop by Gregory II. who changed the name of Winfrid into that of Boniface; seconded also by the powerful protection of Charles Martel, mayor of the palace to Chilperic king of France, he resumed his ministerial labours among the Hessians and Thuringians, and finished with glory the task he had undertaken, in which he received considerable assistance from a number of pious and learned men, who repaired to him from England and France. As the Christian churches erected by Boniface were too numerous to be governed by one bishop, this prelate was advanced to the dignity of archbishop, in the year 738, by Gregory III. by whose authority, and the auspicious protection of Carloman and Pepin, the sons of Charles Martel, he founded, in Germany, the bishopricks of Wurtzbourg, Burabourg, Erfurt, and Aichstadt: to which he added, in the year 744, the famous monastery of Fulda. His last promotion, and the last recompense of his assiduous labours in the propagation of the truth, was his advancement to the archiepiscopal see of Mentz A. D. 746, by Zachary, bishop of Rome, by whom he was, at the same time, created

created primate of Germany and Belgium. In his old age, he returned again to Friesland, that he might finish his ministry in the same place where he had entered first upon its functions: but his piety was ill rewarded by that barbarous people, by whom he was murdered in the year 755, while fifty ecclesiastics, who accompanied him in this voyage, shared the same fate.

IV. Boniface, on account of his ministerial labours, was distinguished by the title of the *Apostle of the Germans*; nor, if we consider the eminent services he rendered to Christianity, will this title appear to have been undeservedly bestowed. But it is necessary to observe, that this eminent prelate was an apostle of modern fashion, and had, in many respects, departed from the excellent model of the primitive and true apostles. Besides his zeal for the glory and authority of the Roman pontiff, which equalled, if it did not surpass, his zeal for the service of Christ, many other things unworthy of a truly Christian minister are laid to his charge. In combating the Pagan superstitions, he did not always use those arms, with which the ancient heralds of the gospel gained such victories; but often employed violence, and sometimes artifice and fraud, to multiply the number of Christians. His *epistles*, moreover, discover an imperious and arrogant temper; a cunning and insidious turn of mind; an excessive zeal for increasing the honours of the sacerdotal order; and a profound ignorance of the true nature and genius of the Christian religion.

V. This prelate was not the only Christian minister who attempted to deliver the German nations from Pagan superstition; several others signalized

signalized their zeal in the same pious undertaking. Corbinian, a French Benedictine monk, after having laboured with vast assiduity in planting the gospel among the Bavarians, became bishop of Friesingen. And Firmin, a Gaul by birth, preached the gospel under various kinds of suffering and opposition in Allatia, Bavaria, and Switzerland.

VI. A war broke out, at this time, between Charlemagne and the Saxons, which contributed much to the propagation of Christianity. The Saxons were, at this time, a numerous and formidable people, who inhabited a considerable part of Germany, and were engaged in perpetual quarrels with the Franks concerning their boundaries and other matters of complaint. Hence Charlemagne turned his arms against this powerful nation, A. D. 772, with a design, not only to subdue that spirit of revolt, but also to engage them to embrace the Christian religion. He hoped, by their conversion, to vanquish their obstinacy, imagining that the precepts of the gospel would allwage their impetuous and restless passions, mitigate their ferocity, and induce them to submit more tamely to the government of the Franks. These projects were great in idea, but difficult in execution; accordingly, the first attempt to convert the Saxons, after having subdued them, was unsuccessful, because it was made, without the aid of violence or threats, by the bishops and monks, whom the victor had left among that conquered people. More forcible means were afterwards used to draw them into the pale of the church, in the wars which Charlemagne carried on, in the years 775, 776, and 780, against that valiant people, whose love of liberty was excessive, and whose

whose aversion to the restraints of sacerdotal authority was inexpressible. But during these wars, their attachment to the superstition of their ancestors was so warmly combated by the allurements of reward, by the terror of punishment, and by the imperious language of victory, that they suffered themselves to be baptized by the missionaries, whom the emperor sent among them for that purpose. These seditions, indeed, were soon after renewed, and fomented by Widekind and Albion, two of the most valiant among the Saxon chiefs, who attempted to abolish the Christian worship by the same violent methods which had contributed to its establishment. But the courage and liberality of Charlemagne, alternately employed to suppress this new rebellion, engaged these chiefs to make a public profession of Christianity in the year 785, and to promise an adherence to it for the rest of their days. To prevent, however, the Saxons from renouncing a religion, which they had embraced with reluctance, several bishops were appointed to reside among them, schools also were erected, and monasteries founded, that the means of instruction might not be wanting. The same precautions were employed among the Huns in Pannonia, to maintain in the profession of Christianity that fierce people, whom Charlemagne had converted to the faith, when, dejected by various defeats, they were no longer able to make head against his arms, and chose rather to be *Christians than slaves*.

VII. Succeeding generations, filled with a grateful sense of the famous exploits which Charlemagne had performed in the service of Christianity, canonised his memory, and turned this

this bloody *warrior* into an eminent *saint*. In the twelfth century, Frederic I. emperor of the Romans, ordered Paschal II. whom he had raised to the pontificate, to enrol the name of this mighty conqueror among the tutelary saints of the church. And indeed Charlemagne merited this honour, according to the opinions which prevailed at that time; for to have enriched the clergy with large donations, and to have extended the boundaries of the church, no matter by what methods, was then considered as a sufficient pretension to the honour of *sainthood*. But in the esteem of those, who judge of *sanctity* by the decisions of the gospel, the *sainted* emperor will appear utterly unworthy of that dignity. For, not to enter into a particular detail of his vices, whose number counterbalanced that of his virtues, it is evident, that his zeal for the conversion of the Huns, Frieslanders, and Saxons, was more animated by ambition than piety; and that his main view was to subdue the converted nations under his dominion, and to tame them to his yoke. It is, moreover, well known, that he made no scruple of seeking the alliance of the infidel Saracens, that he might crush the Greeks, notwithstanding their profession of the Christian religion.

C H A P. II.

Concerning the calamitous events which happened to the church during this century.

I. **T**HE eastern empire had now fallen from its former grandeur, through the repeated shocks of dreadful revolutions, and the consuming

consuming power of intestine calamities. The throne was now become the seat of terror, inquietude, and suspicion; nor was any reign attended with an uninterrupted tranquillity. In this century three emperors were dethroned, loaded with ignominy, and sent into banishment. Under Leo the Isaurian, and his son Constantine, surnamed Copronymus, arose that fatal controversy about the worship of images, which proved a source of innumerable calamities, and weakened, almost incredibly, the force of the empire. These troubles left the Saracens at liberty to ravage the provinces of Asia and Africa, to oppress the Greeks in the most barbarous manner, and to extend their territories on all sides, as also to oppose every where the progress of Christianity, and, in some places, to extirpate it entirely. But the troubles of the empire, and the calamities of the church, did not end here: for about the middle of this century, they were assailed by new enemies, still more fierce and inhuman than those whose usurpations they had hitherto suffered. These were the Turks, a tribe of Tartars, who, breaking forth from the inaccessible wilds about mount Caucasus, overspread Colchis, Iberia, and Albania, rushed from thence into Armenia, and, after having subdued the Saracens, turned their victorious arms against the Greeks.

II. In the year 714, the Saracens crossed the sea, which separates Spain from Africa, dispersed the army of Roderic king of the Spanish Goths, whose defeat was principally due to the treachery of his general Julian, and made themselves masters of the greatest part of his territories. About the same time the empire of the Visigoths, which had subsisted in Spain above
three

three hundred years, was totally overturned by these savage invaders, who also took possession of all the maritime coasts of Gaul from the Pyrenean mountains to the river Rhone, from whence they made frequent excursions, and ravaged the neighbouring countries with fire and sword.

The rapid progress of these bold invaders was checked by Charles Martel, who gained a signal victory over them in a bloody action near the city of Poitiers, A. D. 732. But they soon recovered their strength, and returned with new violence to their devastations. This engaged Charlemagne to lead a formidable army into Spain, with a design to deliver that whole country from their yoke: but this grand enterprize, though it did not entirely miscarry, was not attended with the success, that was expected. The inroads of this warlike people were felt by many of the western provinces, besides those of France and Spain. Several parts of Italy suffered from their incursions; the island of Sardinia was reduced under their yoke; and Sicily was ravaged and oppressed by them in the most inhuman manner. Hence the Christian religion in Spain and Sardinia suffered inexpressibly under these violent usurpers.

In Germany, and the adjacent countries, the Christians were assailed by another sort of enemies; for all such as adhered to the Pagan superstition beheld them with the most inveterate hatred, and persecuted them with the most unrelenting violence. Hence, in several places, castles and fortresses were erected to restrain the incursions of these Barbarian zealots.

PART II.

The INTERNAL HISTORY of the CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

Concerning the state of letters and philosophy during this century.

I. **T**HERE were not wanting among the Greeks men of genius, who might have prevented the total decline of literature; but their zeal was damped by the tumults and desolations that reigned in the empire; and while both church and state were menaced with approaching ruin, the learned were left destitute of that protection which gives both vigour and success to the culture of the arts and sciences. Hence few or none of the Greeks were at all famous either for elegance of diction, copious learning, or the study of philosophy. Frigid homilies, insipid narrations of the exploits of pretended saints, vain and subtil disputes about unessential subjects, bombastic declamations for or against the worship of images, histories composed without method or judgment; were the monuments of Grecian learning in this age.

II. It must, however, be observed, that the Aristotelian philosophy was taught every where in the public schools. The doctrine of Plato had lost all its credit, after the repeated sentences of condemnation that had been passed upon Origen, and the troubles which the Nestorian and Eutychian

Eutychian controversies had excited in the church; so that Platonism now was almost confined to the solitary retreats of the monastic orders. Of all the writers in this century, who contributed to the progress of the Aristotelian philosophy, the most eminent was John Damascenus, who composed a concise, plain, and comprehensive view of the doctrines of the Stagirite. This little work excited numbers, both in Greece and Syria, to the study of that philosophy, whose profelytes increased daily.

III. The history of the Latins exhibits innumerable instances of the grossest ignorance, which will not appear surprising to such as consider the state of Europe in this century. If we except some poor remains of learning, which were yet to be found at Rome, and in certain cities of Italy, the sciences seemed to have abandoned the continent, and fixed their residence in Britain and Ireland. Those, therefore, of the Latin writers, who were distinguished by their learning, were all (a few French and Italians excepted) either British or Scotch. Charlemagne, whose political talents were embellished by a considerable degree of learning, and an ardent zeal for the culture of the sciences, endeavoured to dispel the profound ignorance that reigned in his dominions; in which excellent undertaking he was animated and directed by the counsels of Alcuin. With this view he drew, first from Italy, and afterwards from Britain and Ireland, by his liberality, eminent men, who had distinguished themselves in the various branches of literature; and excited the several orders of the clergy and monks by various encouragements, and the nobility, and others of eminent rank, by his own example,
to

to the pursuit of knowledge in all its branches, human and divine.

IV. In the prosecution of this noble design, the greatest part of the bishops erected, by the express order of the emperor, cathedral schools (so called from their lying contiguous to the principal church in each diocese) in which the youth, set apart for the service of Christ, received a learned education. Those also of the abbots, who had any zeal for Christianity, opened schools in their monasteries, in which the more learned of the fraternity instructed such as were designed for the monastic state, or the sacerdotal order, in the Latin language, and other branches of learning suitable to their future destination. It was formerly believed, that the university of Paris was erected by Charlemagne, but this opinion is rejected by such as have studied the history of this age; though it is evident that this great prince had the honour of laying, in some measure, the foundation of that noble institution. However this question be decided, it is undeniably certain, that the zeal of this emperor, for the propagation and advancement of letters, was very great, and manifested its ardor by a considerable number of excellent establishments; among others, by the famous Palatine school, in which the princes of the blood, and the children of the nobility, were educated by the most learned masters of the times.

V. These excellent establishments were not, however, attended with the desired success; nor was the improvement of the youth, in learning and virtue, at all proportioned to the pains that were taken, and the bounty that was bestowed to procure them a liberal education.

This will not appear surprising, when we consider that the most renowned masters of these times were men of very little genius and abilities, and that their system of learning and philosophy was nothing more than a lean and ghastly skeleton equally unfit for ornament and use. The whole circle of sciences was composed of, what they called, the seven liberal arts, *viz.* grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy; the three former of which they distinguished by the title of *trivium*, and the four latter by that of *quadrivium*. Nothing can be conceived more wretchedly barbarous than the manner in which these sciences were taught, as we may easily perceive from Alcuin's treatise concerning them; and the dissertations of St. Augustin on the same subject, which were in the highest repute at this time. In the greatest part of the schools, the public teachers ventured no further than the *trivium*, and confined their instructions to grammar, rhetoric, and logic: they, however, who, after passing the *trivium*, and also the *quadrivium*, were desirous of rising yet higher in their literary pursuits, were exhorted to apply themselves to the study of Cassiodore and Boethius, as if the progress of human knowledge was bounded by the discoveries of those two writers.

C H A P. II.

(Concerning the doctors and ministers of the church, and its form of government, during this century.

I. **T**HAT corruption of manners, which dishonoured the clergy in the former century, increased in this, and discovered itself under

under the most odious characters. In the east there arose the most violent dissensions among the bishops and doctors of the church, who, forgetting the duties of their stations, threw the state into combustion by their scandalous divisions; and even went so far as to embrace their hands in the blood of their brethren who differed from them. In the western world, Christianity was not less disgraced by the lives of those who pretended to be the luminaries of the church, and who ought to have been so by exhibiting examples of piety and virtue. The clergy abandoned themselves to their passions without restraint: they were distinguished by their luxury, their gluttony, and their lust; they gave themselves up to the pleasures of hunting, and, what was still more remote from their sacred character, to military enterprises. They had so extinguished every principle of fear and shame, that they became incorrigible; nor could the various laws enacted by Carloman, Pepin, and Charlemagne, at all set bounds to their licentiousness.

II. It is amazing, that, notwithstanding their vices, and the perpetual troubles which these vices occasioned, the clergy were still held in the highest veneration, and honoured, as a sort of deities, by the multitude. This veneration for the clergy, and the influence it gave them, were, indeed, carried much higher in the west than in the eastern provinces. And the reasons of this will appear to such as consider the customs that prevailed among the barbarous nations of Europe, before their conversion to Christianity. All these nations, during their continuance in paganism, were absolutely enslaved to their priests, without whose counsel they transacted nothing, either in civil or military affairs.

Upon their conversion to Christianity, they, therefore, thought proper to transfer to the ministers of their new religion, the privileges of their former priests: and the Christian bishops were not only ready to accept the offer, but used all their diligence to secure to themselves, and their successors, the dominion which the ministers of paganism had usurped over an ignorant and brutish people.

III. The honours and privileges, which the western nations had conferred upon the doctors of the church, were now augmented with immense accessions of opulence and authority. The endowments of the church and monasteries, and the revenues of the bishops, were already considerable; but in this century, a new method was found out of acquiring much greater riches to the church, and of increasing it through succeeding ages. An opinion prevailed universally, that the punishment which the righteous judge of the world has reserved for the wicked, was to be prevented by liberal donations to God, and to the churches and clergy. In consequence of this notion, the great and opulent, who were, generally speaking, the most remarkable for their abominable lives, offered rich donations to ministers, in order to avoid the sufferings annexed by the priests to transgression in this life, and to escape the misery denounced against the wicked in a future state. This commodious method of making atonement for iniquity, was the principal source of those immense treasures, which, from this period, began to flow in upon the clergy, the churches, and monasteries, and continued to enrich them through succeeding ages.

IV. And the donations which princes and persons of the first rank presented, in order to make expiation for their sins, did not only consist in *private* possessions, with which the churches and convents were already abundantly enriched; but the church was endowed with several of those *public* grants, which are peculiar to princes and sovereign states, and which are commonly called *regalia*, or royal domains. Emperors and princes signalized their veneration for the clergy, by investing bishops, churches, and monasteries, in the possession of whole provinces, cities, castles, and fortresses, with all the rights and prerogatives of sovereignty. Hence it came to pass that they, who, by their holy profession, were appointed to proclaim to the world the vanity of human grandeur, and to inspire a contempt of sublunary things, became themselves scandalous spectacles of worldly pomp, ambition, and splendour; were created *dukes*, *counts*, and *marquises*, judges, legislators, and sovereigns; and not only gave laws to nations, but also, upon many occasions, gave battle to their enemies at the head of numerous armies. It is here that we are to look for the source of those dreadful calamities, that spread desolation through Europe, in after-times, particularly of those bloody wars concerning *investitures*, and those obstinate contentions about the *regalia*.

V. These excessive donations began in this century; nor do we find any examples of them in preceding times. From hence we may conclude, that these donations were partly owing to customs peculiar to the European nations. The kings of these nations endeavoured, by all means, to attach to their interests those whom they considered as their friends; and, for this purpose,

purpose, distributed among them extensive territories, cities, and fortresses, reserving to themselves no more than the supreme dominion; and the military service of their powerful vassals. This being customary in Europe, it was esteemed by princes a high instance of prudence to distribute among the Christian doctors, the same sort of donations that they had formerly made to their generals and clients; so that superstition alone was not always the principle that drew forth their liberality. They hoped also to check the seditious spirits of their vassals, by the influence of the bishops, whose commands were highly respected, and whose spiritual thunderbolts struck terror into the boldest hearts.

VI. This prodigious accession to the opulence and authority of the clergy in the west began at their head, the Roman pontiff, and spread gradually from thence among the inferior bishops, and also among the sacerdotal and monastic orders. The barbarous nations, who received the gospel, looked upon the bishop of Rome, as the successor of their chief *druid*, or high priest. And as this tremendous druid had enjoyed a boundless authority, and had been treated with a degree of veneration, that degenerated into terror; so they thought proper to confer upon the chief of the bishops the same authority that had formerly been vested in their *arch-druid*. The Roman pontiff received with delight these august privileges; and lest attempts might be made to deprive him of them, he strengthened his title by a variety of passages drawn from ancient history, yea, and by arguments of a religious nature. This conduct of a superstitious people swelled the arrogance of the Roman druid to an enormous size; and gave

gave to the see of Rome that despotic authority, in civil and political matters, that was unknown to former ages. Hence, among other unhappy circumstances, arose that monstrous opinion, that such persons as were excluded from the communion of the church, forfeited not only their civil rights as citizens, but even the common privileges of humanity. This horrid opinion, which was a fatal source of wars, massacres, and rebellions without number, and which contributed more than any thing else to augment and confirm the papal authority, was, unhappily for Europe, borrowed by Christians, or rather by the clergy, from the Pagan superstitions.

VII. We see in the annals of the French nation the following remarkable instance of the enormous power that was vested in the Roman pontiff. Pepin, who was *mayor of the palace* to Childeric III. and who, in the exercise of that high office, was possessed, in reality, of the royal power, not contented with this, formed the design of dethroning his sovereign. For this purpose the states of the realm were assembled by Pepin, A. D. 751; and though they were devoted to the interests of this ambitious usurper, they gave it as their opinion, that the bishop of Rome was to be consulted, whether such a project was lawful or not. In consequence of this, ambassadors were sent by Pepin to Zachary, the reigning pontiff, with the following question: *Whether the divine law did not permit a warlike people to dethrone a pusillanimous monarch, who was incapable of discharging the functions of royalty, and to substitute in his place one more worthy to rule, and who had already rendered most important services to the state?* The situation of Zachary, who stood in need of the succours of
Pepin

Pepin against the Greeks and Lombards, rendered his answer such as the usurper desired. And when this favourable decision was published in France, the unhappy Childeric was stript of royalty without the least opposition; and Pepin, without the smallest resistance, stepped into the throne! This decision was solemnly confirmed by Stephen II. the successor of Zachary, who dissolved the obligation of the oath of fidelity and allegiance which Pepin had sworn to Childeric. And to render his title as sacred as possible, Stephen anointed and crowned him, with his wife and two sons, for the second time.

VIII. This compliance of the Roman pontiffs proved an abundant source of opulence and credit to the church. When that part of Italy, which was as yet subject to the Grecian empire, was involved in confusion and trouble, by the seditions and tumults which arose from the imperial edicts against the worship of images; the kings of the Lombards employed their arms and negociations to terminate these contests. Their success, indeed, was only advantageous to themselves; for they managed matters so as to become, by degrees, masters of the Grecian provinces in Italy, which were subject to the Exarch, who resided at Ravenna. Nay, one of these monarchs, named Aistulphus, carried his views still further. Elated with these new accessions to his dominions, he formed the project of reducing all Italy under the yoke of the Lombards. The terrified pontiff, Stephen II. addresses himself to Pepin, and implores his assistance. The French monarch crosses the Alps, A. D. 754, with a numerous army; and having defeated Aistulphus, obliged him, by treaty, to deliver up to the see of Rome, the exarchate of Ravenna, Pentapolis, and

and all the cities, castles, and territories which he had seized in the Roman dukedom. It was not, however, long before the Lombard prince violated an engagement which he had entered into with reluctance. In the year 755, he laid siege to Rome for the second time, but was again obliged to sue for peace by Pepin, who returned into Italy, and forcing the Lombard to execute the treaty he had violated, made a new grant of the exarchate, and of Pentapolis to the Roman pontiff and his successors. And thus was the bishop of Rome raised to the rank of a temporal prince.

IX. After the death of Pepin, Dideric king of the Lombards invaded the territories that had been granted by the French monarch to the see of Rome. In this extremity, Adrian I. who was pontiff at that time, fled for succour to Charles, the son of Pepin, afterwards distinguished by the name of Charlemagne. This prince, as much from policy as superstition, adopted immediately the cause of the trembling pontiff. He passed the Alps with a formidable army, A. D. 774, overturned the empire of the Lombards in Italy, which had subsisted above two hundred years, sent their exiled monarch into France, and proclaimed himself king of the Lombards. These conquests offered to Charlemagne an occasion of visiting Rome, where he not only confirmed the grants which had been made by his father, but added to them a cession of several cities and provinces in Italy, which had not been contained in Pepin's grant.

X. By this act, Charlemagne opened for himself a passage to the empire of the west, and to the supreme dominion over the city of Rome and its territory, upon which the western empire seemed

seemed then to depend. He had, no doubt, been meditating this arduous project, which his father Pepin had probably formed before him, but the circumstances of the times obliged him to wait for a favourable occasion of putting it in execution. This was offered him in the year 800, when the affairs of the Greeks were reduced to the utmost extremity after the death of Leo III. and the barbarous murder of his son Constantine, and while the impious Irene held the reins of empire. This opportunity was seized by Charles, who set out for Rome, where he was received with the utmost demonstrations of zeal by the sovereign pontiff, who had entered into his views, and persuaded the people, elated with high notions of their independency and elective power, to unite their suffrages in favour of this prince, and to proclaim him emperor of the west.

XI. Charles, upon his elevation to the empire of the west and the government of Rome, seems to have reserved to himself only the supreme dominion, and to have granted to the church of Rome a subordinate jurisdiction over that great city, and its annexed territory. This grant was undoubtedly suggested to him by the ambitious pontiff as a matter of indispensable obligation, and many fictitious deeds were probably produced to justify the claims of the church to this high authority. It was no doubt alledged, that Constantine the Great, when he removed the seat of the empire to Constantinople, delivered up Rome, the old metropolis, with its adjacent territories, commonly called the Roman dukedom, to the church, with no other restriction than that this should be no detriment to his supreme dominion.

XII. While

XII. While the power and opulence of the Roman pontiffs were rising to the greatest height by these events, they received a mortifying check in consequence of a quarrel which broke out between these haughty pontiffs and the Grecian emperors. Leo the Isaurian, and his son Constantine Copronymus, incensed at the zeal which Gregory II. and III. discovered for the worship of images, not only confiscated the treasures and lands which the church of Rome possessed in Sicily, Calabria, and Apulia, but moreover withdrew the bishops of these countries, and also the various provinces and churches of Illyricum, from the jurisdiction of the Roman see, and subjected them to the spiritual dominion of the bishop of Constantinople. And so inflexibly were the Grecian emperors bent upon humbling the arrogance of the Roman pontiffs, that no intreaties, supplications, nor threats could engage them to abandon their purpose. It is here we must look for the original source of that vehement contest between the Roman pontiff and the bishop of Constantinople, which, in the following century, divided the Greek and Latin churches, and was so pernicious to the interests of true Christianity.

XIII. The monastic discipline was extremely relaxed at this time both in the eastern and western provinces. The only monks who escaped this general corruption, were they who passed their days in the deserts of Egypt, Syria, and Mesopotamia, amidst the austerities of a wretched life, and remote from all the comforts of society: yet the merit of having preserved their discipline was sadly counterbalanced by the gross ignorance, the fanatical madness, and the sordid superstition that reigned among them.

Those of the monastic orders who lived nearer cities and populous towns, troubled frequently the public tranquillity by the tumults and seditions they fomented among the multitude, so that it became necessary to check their rebellious ambition by the severe laws that were enacted against them by Constantine Copronymus, and other emperors. The greatest part of the western monks followed, at this time, the rule of St. Benedict; though there were every where convents which adopted the discipline of other orders. But as they increased in opulence they lost sight of all rules, and submitted, at length, to no other discipline than that of intemperance, voluptuousness, and sloth. Charlemagne attempted, by various edicts, to put a stop to this growing evil; but his efforts were attended with little success.

XIV. This universal corruption of the monks gave rise to a new order of priests in the west, which was a sort of middle order between the *monks* or *regulars*, and the *secular clergy*. This new species of ecclesiastics adopted the monastic discipline, so far as to have their dwelling and their table in common, and to assemble themselves at certain hours for divine service; but they entered not into the vows which were peculiar to the monks, and they were also appointed to discharge the ministerial functions in certain churches which were committed to their pastoral direction. These ecclesiastics soon received the name of *canons*. The common opinion attributes the institution of this order to Chrodegangus, bishop of Metz. For though before this time there were in Italy, Africa, and other provinces, convents of ecclesiastics, who lived after the manner of the *canons*; yet
Chrodegangus,

Chrodegangus, who, towards the middle of this century, subjected to this rule the clergy of Metz, not only added to their religious ceremonies the custom of singing hymns, at certain hours, but also, by his example, excited the Franks, the Italians, and the Germans to distinguish themselves by their zeal in favour of the *canons*, to erect monasteries for them, and to introduce their rule into their respective countries.

XV. The supreme dominion over the church and its possessions was vested in the emperors and kings, both in the eastern and the western world. The sovereignty of the Grecian emperors has never been contested; and though the partisans of the Roman pontiffs endeavour to render dubious the supremacy of the Latin monarchs over the church, yet this supremacy is too manifest to be disputed by such as have considered the matter attentively, and it is acknowledged by the most candid writers even of the Romish communion. Adrian I. in a council of bishops assembled at Rome, conferred upon Charlemagne, and his successors, the right of election to the see of Rome; and though neither Charlemagne, nor his son Lewis, were willing to exercise this power in all its extent, by naming and creating the pontiff upon every vacancy, yet they reserved the right of approving and confirming the person that was elected to that dignity by the priests and people: nor was the consecration of the elected pontiff of the least validity, unless performed in the presence of the emperor's ambassadors. The Roman pontiffs obeyed the laws of the emperors; received their judicial decisions, as of indispensable obligation, and executed them with the utmost punctuality. The

kings of the Franks appointed extraordinary judges, whom they called *envoys*, to inspect into the lives and manners of the clergy superior and inferior, to take cognizance of their contests, to terminate their disputes, to enact laws concerning the public worship, and to punish the crimes of the sacred order, as well as those of other citizens. All churches also, and monasteries, were obliged to pay to the public treasury a tribute proportioned to their respective lands and possessions, except such as, by the pure favour of the supreme powers, were graciously exempted.

XVI. It is true, the Latin emperors did not assume to themselves the cognizance and decision of controversies that were purely religious. They acknowledged, on the contrary, that these matters belonged to the Roman pontiff and the ecclesiastical councils. But this jurisdiction of the pontiff was confined within narrow limits; he could decide nothing by his sole authority, but was obliged to convene a council when any religious differences were to be terminated. Nor did the provinces, when any controversy arose, wait for the decision of the bishop of Rome; but assembled, by their own authority, their particular councils, in which the bishops gave their thoughts, with the utmost freedom, and voted often in direct opposition to the opinion of the Roman pontiff: all which is evident from what passed in the councils assembled by the Franks and Germans, in order to determine the celebrated controversy concerning the use and worship of images. It is further to be observed, that the power of convening councils, and the right of presiding in them, were the prerogatives of the emperors and sovereign princes, in whose dominions these assemblies

assemblies were held; and that no decrees of any council obtained the force of laws, until they were confirmed by the supreme magistrate. Thus was the spiritual authority of Rome wisely bounded by the civil power; but its ambitious pontiffs fretted under the imperial curb, eager to break loose their bonds. Nay, they formed projects which seemed less the effects of ambition than of frenzy; for they claimed a supreme dominion, not only over the church, but also over kings themselves, and pretended to reduce the whole universe under their ghostly jurisdiction. However extravagant these pretensions were, they were followed by the most vigorous efforts, and the wars and tumults that arose in the following century, contributed much to render these efforts successful.

XVII. If we turn our eyes towards the writers of this century, we shall find very few that stand distinguished either on account of erudition or genius. Among the Greeks, the following only seem worthy of mention.

George Syncellus and Theophanes, who are not the least considerable among the writers of the Byzantine history, though they be in all respects infinitely below the ancient Greek and Latin historians.

But the writer, who surpassed all his contemporaries among the Greeks and Orientals, was John Damascenus, a man of genius and eloquence, who, in a variety of productions, explained the Peripatetic philosophy, and illustrated the capital points of the Christian doctrine. Yet it must be acknowledged, that the eminent talents of this great man were tainted with that sordid superstition, and that excessive veneration for the ancient fathers, that were the reigning defects.

defects of the age he lived in, not to mention his wretched method of explaining the doctrines of the gospel according to the principles of the Aristotelian philosophy.

XVIII. The first place among the Latin writers is due to Charlemagne, whose love of letters was one of the ornaments of his imperial dignity. The laws which are known by the title of *Capitularia*, with several *Epistles*, and a *Book concerning images*, are attributed to this prince; though it seems highly probable, that the most of these compositions were drawn up by other pens.

After this learned prince, we may justly place venerable Bede, so called from his illustrious virtue; Alcuin, the preceptor of Charlemagne; and Paulinus of Aquileia, who were all distinguished by their laborious application, and their zeal for the advancement of learning, and who treated the various branches of literature, that were known in this century, in such a manner as to convince us, that it was the infelicity of the times, rather than the want of genius, that hindered them from arising to higher degrees of perfection. Add to these, Eginard, the celebrated author of the *Life of Charlemagne*, and other productions; Paul, the deacon, who acquired a lasting reputation by his *History of the Lombards*, his *Book of Homilies*, and his miscellaneous labours; Ambrose Authpert, who wrote a commentary on the Revelations; and Theodulphus bishop of Orleans.

CHAP. III.
*Concerning the doctrine of the Christian church
 in this century.*

I. **T**HE fundamental doctrines of christianity were, as yet, preserved in the writings both of the Greeks and Latins, as seems evident from the discourse of John Damascenus *concerning the orthodox faith*, and the confession of faith which was drawn up by Charlemagne. But the pure seed of truth was choked by a monstrous and incredible quantity of noxious weeds. The rational simplicity of the Christian worship was corrupted by an idolatrous veneration for images and other superstitious inventions, and the sacred flame of divine charity was extinguished by the violent contentions, which the progress of these superstitions occasioned. All acknowledged the efficacy of our Saviour's merits: and yet all, one way or another, laboured to diminish the persuasion of this efficacy, by teaching that Christians might appease an offended deity by voluntary acts of mortification, or by gifts and oblations lavished upon the church, and by exhorting such as were desirous of salvation to place their confidence in the merits of the saints.

II. The piety in vogue during this and some succeeding ages consisted in building and embellishing churches, in endowing monasteries, hunting after the relicks of saints, and treating them with an absurd veneration, in procuring the intercession of the saints by rich oblations or superstitious rites, in worshipping images, and in pilgrimages

pilgrimages to those places which were esteemed holy, and chiefly to Palestine. The pious Christian, and the profligate, shewed equal zeal in the performance of these superstitious services, which were looked upon as of the highest efficacy in order to eternal salvation; they were performed by the latter as an expiation for their crimes; and by the former with a view to obtain the good things of this life, and an easy passage to life eternal. The genuine religion of Jesus, if we except a few of its doctrines contained in the *Creed*, was utterly unknown, not only to the multitude in general, but also to the doctors of the first rank, and the consequences of this corrupt ignorance were fatal to the interests of virtue. All orders of men, regardless of the duties of the gospel, rushed headlong into all sorts of wickedness, from the delusive hopes, that by the intercession of the saints, and the credit of the priests at the throne of God, they would easily obtain the remission of their enormities.

III. The Greeks were of opinion, that the holy scriptures had been successfully interpreted by the ancient commentators, and therefore, that they rendered a most important service to the students in divinity, when, without either judgment or choice, they extracted and compiled from the works of these admired sages their explanatory observations on the sacred writings.

The Latin expositors may be divided into two classes. In the first, we place those who, after the example of the Greeks, employed their labour in collecting into one body the interpretations of the ancients. Bede distinguished himself among the expositors of this class by his explication

explication of the epistles of St. Paul, drawn from the writings of Augustin and others. The writers of the second class made use of their own penetration in investigating the sense of the holy scriptures, such as Alcuin, Ambrose, Authpert, the expositors of the *Revelations*, nay and Bede also, who belongs, in reality, to both classes. It must, however, be acknowledged, that all these commentators were destitute of the qualities that are essential to the sacred critic; for we find them in their explications neglecting entirely the natural sense of the words, and running blind-fold after a certain mystical meaning; and thus they delivered their own rash fictions and crude fancies, as the sentiments of the sacred writers.

IV. The veneration of Charlemagne for the sacred writings was carried so far, as to persuade that monarch, that they contained the seeds and principles of all arts and sciences. Hence the zeal with which that prince excited the more learned among the clergy to direct their pious labours towards the illustration of the holy scriptures. Several laws which he published to encourage this species of learning are yet extant, as also various monuments of his solicitude about the advancement of Christian knowledge.

V. This zeal and industry of the emperor contributed, no doubt, to rouse from their sloth a lazy and ignorant clergy. We cannot, however, help observing, that this laborious prince imprudently established certain customs, and confirmed others, which had a manifest tendency to defeat, in a great measure, his laudable designs of promoting Christian knowledge. He confirmed the practice already in use, of reading and explaining to the people, in the public assemblies,

assemblies, certain portions only of the scriptures; and reduced the different methods of worship followed in different churches into one fixed rule, which was to be observed with the most perfect uniformity in all. The zeal and activity of this great prince did not stop here; for he ordered the lives of the principal saints to be written in a moderate volume, of which copies were dispersed throughout his dominions, that the people might have in the dead, examples of piety and virtue, which were no where to be found among the living. All these designs were certainly formed with pious intentions, and, considering the state of things in this century, were, in several respects, useful; yet, they contributed, undoubtedly, to encourage the priests in their criminal sloth, and their shameful neglect of the study of the scriptures. For the greatest part of them employed their time and labour only upon those parts of the sacred writings, which the emperor had appointed to be read in the churches and explained to the people; and never attempted to exercise their capacities upon the rest of the divine word. The greatest part of the clergy also, instead of composing themselves the discourses they recited in public, confined themselves to their book of homilies, that was published by the authority of their sovereign.

VI. None of the Latins carried their theological enterprizes so far as to give a connected system of the doctrines of Christianity. The labours of the divines of this age were totally employed in collecting the opinions of the *fathers* of the first six centuries; and so blind was their veneration for these doctors, that they regarded their dictates as infallible, and their writings

writings as the boundaries of truth, beyond which reason was not permitted to push its researches. The Irish or Hibernians, who in this century were known by the name of *Scots*, were the only divines who refused to dishonour their reason by submitting it implicitly to authority. Naturally subtil and sagacious, they applied their philosophy, such as it was, to the illustration of the truth and doctrines of religion; a method which was almost generally abhorred and exploded in all other nations.

That the Hibernians, who were called *Scots*, in this century, were lovers of learning, and distinguished themselves, in these times of ignorance, by the culture of the sciences beyond all the other European nations, travelling through the most distant lands both with a view to improve and to communicate their knowledge, is a certain fact, as we see them, in the most authentic records of antiquity, discharging, with the highest reputation and applause, the function of doctor in France, Germany, and Italy, both during this and the following century.

The Greeks were not so destitute of systematical divines as the Latins. John Damascenus composed a complete body of the Christian doctrine, under the title of *Four Books concerning the Orthodox Faith*. The two kinds of *Theology*, which the Latins termed *scholastic* and *didactic*, were united in this laborious performance, in which the author not only explains the doctrines he delivers by reasoning, but confirms his explications by the authority of the ancient doctors. This book was received with the highest applause, and was so excessively admired, that at length it came to be acknowledged as the only rule of divine truth. Many, however,

however, complain of this applauded writer, as having consulted more the conjectures of human reason, and the opinions of the ancients, than the genuine dictates of the sacred oracles, and of having, in consequence of this method, deviated from the essential principles of theology.

VII. None of the moral writers of this century attempted forming a complete system of the duties of the Christian life. John, surnamed Carpathius, a Greek writer, composed some *exhortatory discourses*, in which there are scarcely any marks of judgment. Among the monastic orders nothing was relished, but the enthusiastic strains of the Mystics, and the doctrines of Dionysius the Areopagite, their pretended chief. The Latin writers confined their labours in morality to some general precepts concerning virtue and vice, that seemed rather destined to regulate the external actions of Christians, than to purify their inward principles.

VIII. The controversies that turned upon the essential points of religion were, during this century, few in number, and scarcely any of them managed with judgment. The greatest part of the Greeks were involved in the dispute concerning images. John Damascenus exposed the errors of all the different sects in a short, but useful treatise; he also attacked the Manicheans and Nestorians with a particular vehemence, and even went so far as to combat the erroneous doctrine of the Saracens.

IX. Of all the controversies which perplexed the Christian church during this century, that concerning the worship of images was the most pernicious in its consequences. The first sparks of this terrible flame had already appeared under the reign of Phillipicus Bardanes, who was created emperor

emperor of the Greeks a little after the commencement of this century. This prince ordered a picture, which represented the sixth general council, to be pulled down from its place in the church of St. Sophia, A. D. 712. Nor did he stop here; but sent an order to Rome to remove all images of that nature from the churches and other places of worship. But his orders were far from producing their designed effect; on the contrary, Constantine, the Roman pontiff, not only rejected, by a formal protest, the imperial edict, but ordered six pictures, representing the six general councils, to be placed in the porch of St. Peter's church; and, that no act of rebellion or arrogance might be left unemployed, he assembled a council at Rome, in which he caused the emperor himself to be condemned as an apostate from the true religion. These first tumults were quelled by a revolution, which, the year following, deprived Bardanes of the imperial throne.

X. But the dispute broke out with redoubled fury under Leo the Isaurian, a prince of the greatest resolution, and the new tumults it excited were both violent and durable. Leo, unable to bear any longer the excessive height to which the Greeks carried their superstitious attachment to the worship of images, and the reproaches, which this drew upon the Christians from the Jews and Saracens, determined, by the most vigorous proceedings, to root out at once this growing evil. For this purpose he issued out an edict, A. D. 726, by which it was ordered, not only that the worship of images should be abrogated, but also that all the images, except that of Christ's crucifixion, should be removed out of the churches. The imperial

edict produced such effects, as might have been expected from the frantic enthusiasm of a superstitious people. A civil war broke out in the islands of Archipelago, ravaged a part of Asia, and afterwards reached Italy. The people, partly from their own ignorance, but principally in consequence of the suggestions of the priests and monks, who had rendered the worship of images a source of opulence to their churches and cloisters, were led to regard the emperor as an apostate, and hence they considered themselves as freed from their oath of allegiance, and from all the obligations that attach subjects to their lawful sovereign.

XI. The Roman pontiffs Gregory I. and II. were the authors and ring-leaders of these commotions and insurrections in Italy. The former, upon the emperor's refusing to revoke his edict against images, declared him unworthy of the name of a Christian, and excluded him from the communion of the church; and no sooner was this formidable sentence made public, than the Romans and other Italian provinces, that were subject to the Grecian empire, violated their allegiance, and rising in arms either massacred or banished all the emperor's officers. Leo, exasperated by these insolent proceedings, resolved to chastise the Italian rebels, and to make the haughty pontiff feel, in a particular manner, the effects of his resentment; but he failed in the attempt. Doubly irritated by this disappointment, he vented his fury against images and their worshippers, in the year 730, in a much more terrible manner than he had hitherto done; for, in a council assembled at Constantinople, he degraded from his office Germanus, the bishop of that imperial city, who was a patron

patron of images, put Anastasius in his place, ordered all the images to be publicly burnt, and inflicted a variety of severe punishments upon such as were attached to that idolatrous worship. These rigorous measures divided the Christian church into two violent factions, whose contests were carried on with an ungoverned rage, and produced nothing but mutual invectives and assassinations. Of these factions the one adopted the worship of images, and were on that account called *Iconoduli* or *Iconolatæ*; while the other maintained that such worship was unlawful, and that nothing was more worthy of the zeal of Christians than to destroy those statues and pictures, that were the occasions and objects of this gross idolatry; and hence they were distinguished by the titles of *Iconomachi* and *Iconoclastæ*. The furious zeal, which Gregory II. had shewn in defending image-worship, was not only imitated, but even surpassed by his successor, the III^d of that name; and it was owing to their extravagant attachment to image-worship that the Italian provinces were torn from the Grecian empire.

XII. Constantine Copronymus succeeded his father Leo, A. D. 741, and, animated with an equal zeal against the new idolatry, employed all his influence in extirpating the worship of images in opposition to the vigorous efforts of the Roman pontiffs, and the superstitious monks. But his manner of proceeding was attended with greater equity and moderation, than had appeared in the measures pursued by Leo; for, knowing the respect which the Greeks had for the decisions of general councils, whose authority they considered as supreme and unlimited, he assembled at Constantinople, A. D. 754, a

council composed of the eastern bishops, in order to have this important question examined with the utmost care, and decided by a just and lawful authority. This assembly, which the Greeks regard as the *seventh œcumenical council*, solemnly condemned the worship and also the use of images. But this decision was not sufficient to vanquish the blind obstinacy of superstition; many adhered still to their idolatrous worship, and none more than the monks, who still continued to excite commotions in the state, and to blow the flames of sedition and rebellion among the people. Their malignity was, however, chastised by Constantine, who, filled with just indignation, punished several of them in an exemplary manner, and by new laws set bounds to the violence of monastic rage. Leo IV. who, after the death of Constantine, was declared emperor, A. D. 775, adopted the sentiments of his father and grandfather, and pursued the measures which they had concerted for the extirpation of idolatry out of the Christian church. But having perceived that the worshippers of images could not be engaged by mild and gentle proceedings to abandon this superstitious practice, he had recourse to penal laws.

XIII. A cup of poison, administered by the impious counsel of a perfidious spouse, deprived Leo IV. of his life, A. D. 780, and rendered the cause of images triumphant. The profligate Irene, after having accomplished the death of her husband, held the reins of empire during the minority of her son Constantine; and, to establish her authority, entered into an alliance with Adrian, bishop of Rome, A. D. 786, and summoned a council at Nice in Bithynia, which is known by the title of the *second Nicene council*.

In

In this assembly the imperial laws concerning the new idolatry were abrogated, the decrees of the council of Constantinople reversed, the worship of images and of the cross established, and severe punishments denounced against such as maintained that God was the only object of religious adoration. It is impossible to imagine any thing more ridiculous than the arguments upon which the council founded their decrees. The authority, however, of these decrees was held sacred by the Romans, and the Greeks considered in the light of traitors all such as refused to submit to them. The other enormities of the flagitious Irene, and her deserved fate, cannot, with propriety, be treated of here.

XIV. In these violent contests, the most of the Latins, such as the Britons, Germans and Gauls, seemed to steer a middle way between the opposite tenets of the contending parties. They were of opinion that images might be lawfully preserved, and even placed in the churches, but, at the same time, they looked upon all worship of them as highly offensive to the Supreme Being. Such, particularly, were the sentiments of Charlemagne, who distinguished himself in this important controversy. By the advice of the French bishops he ordered some learned and judicious divine to compose *Four Books concerning images*, which he sent, in the year 790, to Adrian, the Roman pontiff, with a view to engage him to withdraw his approbation of the decrees of that council. In this performance the reasons alledged by the Nicene bishops to justify the worship of images, are refuted with great accuracy and spirit. They were not, however, left without defence; Adrian, who was afraid of acknowledging even

an emperor for his master, composed an answer to the *Four Books* mentioned above, but neither his arguments, nor his authority, were sufficient to support the superstition he endeavoured to maintain; for, in the year 794, Charlemagne assembled, at Francfort on the Maine, a council of three hundred bishops, in order to re-examine this important question; in which the opinion contained in the *Four Books* was solemnly confirmed, and the worship of images unanimously condemned. From hence we may conclude, that in this century the Latins deemed it neither impious, nor unlawful, to dissent from the opinion of the Roman pontiff, and even to charge that prelate with error.

XV. While the controversy concerning images was at its height, a new contest arose among the Latins and Greeks about the source from whence the Holy Ghost proceeded. The Latins affirmed, that this divine spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son; the Greeks, on the contrary, asserted, that it proceeded from the Father only. The origin of this controversy is covered with perplexity. It is, however, certain, that it was agitated in the council of Gentilli, near Paris, A. D. 767, in presence of the emperor's legates, and from this we may conclude, with probability, that it arose in Greece at that time when the contest about images was carried on with the greatest vehemence.

CHAP. IV.

Concerning the rites and ceremonies used in the church during this century.

I. **T**HE religion of this century consisted almost entirely in a motley round of external rites and ceremonies. We are not, therefore, to wonder that more zeal and diligence were employed in multiplying and regulating these, than in correcting the vices of men, in enlightening their understandings, and forming their hearts. The administration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, which was deemed the most solemn branch of divine worship, was now every where embellished with a variety of senseless fopperies, which destroyed the beautiful simplicity of that institution. We also find manifest traces in this century of that superstitious custom of celebrating what were called *solitary masses*, though it be difficult to decide whether they were instituted by a public law, or introduced by the authority of private persons.

II. Charlemagne seemed disposed to stem this torrent of superstition, which gathered force from day to day; for not to mention the zeal with which he opposed the worship of images, there are other circumstances that bear testimony to his intentions, such as his preventing the multiplication of festivals, by reducing them to a limited number, his prohibiting the ceremony of consecrating the church-bells by the rite of holy aspersion, and other ecclesiastical laws of his enacting, which redound to his honour. Several circumstances, however, concurred to render his designs abortive, and none
more

more than his excessive attachment to the Roman pontiffs, who were the patrons and protectors of those who exerted themselves in the cause of ceremonies. This vehement passion for the pontiff was inherited by this great prince from his father Pepin, who had already commanded the manner of singing, and the kind of church-music in use at Rome, to be observed in all Christian churches. It was in conformity with his example, and in compliance with the importunate sollicitation of Adrian, that Charlemagne laboured to bring all the Latin churches to follow, as their model, the church of Rome; not only in the article now mentioned, but also in the whole form of their worship, in every circumstance of their religious service. Several churches however, among which those of Milan and Corbetta distinguished themselves, absolutely rejected this proposal, and could neither be brought by persuasion nor violence to change their usual method of worship.

C H A P. V.

Concerning the divisions and heresies that troubled the church during this century.

LTHE Arians, Manicheans, and Marcionites, though often depressed by the power of the secular arm, gathered strength in the east amidst the tumults and divisions with which the Grecian empire was perpetually agitated, and drew great numbers into their opinions. The Monothelites, to whose cause the emperor Philippicus, and many others of the first rank were zealous well-wishers, regained their credit in several places. The condition

also.

also of both the Nestorians and Eutychians was easy and agreeable under the dominion of the Arabians; their power was considerable; nor were they destitute of means of weakening the Greeks their irreconcilable adversaries, and of spreading their doctrines, and multiplying every where the number of their adherents.

II. In the church which Boniface had newly erected in Germany, he himself tells us, that there were many perverse and erroneous reprobates, who had no true notion of religion, and his friends and adherents confirm this assertion. But the testimony both of the one and the other is undoubtedly partial; since it appears from the most evident proofs, that the persons here accused of errors and heresies were Irish and French divines, who refused that blind submission to the church of Rome, which Boniface was so zealous to propagate. Adalbert a Gaul, and Clement a native of Ireland, were the persons whose opposition gave the most trouble to the ambitious legate. The former got himself consecrated bishop without the consent of Boniface, excited tumults among the eastern Franks, and appears, indeed, to have been both flagitious in his conduct and erroneous in his opinions. As to Clement, his character and sentiments were maliciously misrepresented, since it appears, by the most authentic accounts, that he was much better acquainted with the true principles and doctrines of Christianity than Boniface himself; and hence he is considered by many as a confessor and sufferer for the truth in this barbarous age. Be that as it will, both Adalbert and Clement were condemned, at the instigation of Boniface, by the pontiff Zachary, in a council assembled at Rome, A. D. 748, and in consequence

quence thereof were committed to prison, where, in all probability, they concluded their days.

Indeed Boniface was too ignorant to be a proper judge of heresy, as appears by his condemning Virgilius for believing that there were antipodes. The great heresy of Clement seems to have been his preferring the decisions of scripture to decrees of councils and the opinions of the fathers, which he took the liberty to reject when they were not conformable to the word of God.

III. Religious discord ran still higher in Spain, France, and Germany, towards the conclusion of this century; and the most unhappy tumults and commotions were occasioned by a question proposed to Felix, bishop of Urgella, by Elipand, archbishop of Toledo, who desired to know *in what sense Christ was the Son of God?* The answer which the former gave to this question, was, that Christ, considered in his divine nature, was *truly and essentially* the Son of God; but that, considered as a man, he was only so, *nominally and by adoption.* This doctrine was spread abroad by the two prelates; Elipand propagated it in the different provinces of Spain, and Felix throughout Septimania, while the pontiff Adrian, and the greatest part of the Latin doctors, looked upon this opinion as a renovation of the Nestorian heresy, by its representing Christ, as divided into two distinct persons. In consequence of this, Felix was successively condemned by the councils of Narbonne, Ratibon, Francfort on the Maine, and Rome; and was finally obliged, by the council of Aix-la-Chapelle, to change his opinion. The change he made was, however, rather nominal than real; for he still retained his doctrine, and died in the firm

firm belief of it at Lyons, where he had been banished by Charlemagne. Elipand, on the contrary, lived secure in Spain under the dominion of the Saracens, far removed from the thunder of synods and councils, and out of the reach of that coercive power in religious matters, whose utmost efforts can go no further than to make the erroneous, hypocrites or martyrs. Many are of opinion, that the disciples of Felix, who were called *Adoptians*, departed much less from the doctrine generally received among Christians, than is commonly imagined; and that what chiefly distinguished their tenets was the term they used, and their manner of expression, rather than a real diversity of sentiments.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.